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THE EDITORS,

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THE AMERICAN PREACHER;

OR, A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS

FROM SOME OF THE

MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,

NOW LIVING,

IN THE UNITED STATES,

OF

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

VOLUME I.

ELIZABETH-TOWN, (NEW-JERSEY)
PRINTED BY SHEPARD KOLLOCK, FOR THE EDITORS,
WHO HOLD THE PRIVILEGE OF COPY-RIGHT.

M.DCC.XCI.

PREFACE.

TO THOSE, who have ſeen the plan and circular letter ſent abroad for the execution of this work, little information will be neceſſary; but for the information of thoſe, who have not ſeen them, it may not be improper, or out of place, to ſay—that the following were the objects in view, and thoſe which were publiſhed as the foundation and intention of the work.

"I. To bring into public view many excellent diſcourſes now in manuſcript, promiſſing great benefit to the intereſts of Religion.

"II. To unite in one work ſome of the beſt performances of the day, as a ſpecimen of the pulpit talents of the time.

"III. By uniting the ſeveral moſt important religious denominations in one work, to open the door for the more extenſive exerciſe of CHRISTIAN CHARITY among CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

"IV. To afford Chriiſtan families a compendium of Chriſtian inſtruction.

"V. To prevent the farther importation of printed Sermons, by encouraging the publications of our own country."

SUCH were the real, and, we truſt, juſtifiable reaſons, by which the public were invited to encourage the plan.

BESIDES the influence the plan itſelf might be ſuppoſed to claim, it was ſupported by the following recommendation.

"HAVING *duly conſidered the plan of the* "AMERICAN PREACHER, *now offered for* "*the approbation of the public, we take the* "*liberty of ſignifying our concurrence in the* "*ſame: not doubting but it may well execute* "*the objects it propoſes.*

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON, *Governor of the State of New-Jerſey.*
GEORGE CLINTON, *Governor of the State of New-York.*
WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON, *Preſident of Columbia College, and one of the Senators of the United States.*
ELIAS BOUDINOT, *L. L. D. Member of Congreſs.*"

THE ſucceſs of the plan and circular letter, is ſufficiently teſtified by the exiſtence

of the work in its preſent form, as well as by the reſpectable liſt of ſubſcribers who have ſupported it.

It is not pretended that all the preachers of the Goſpel in the United States, who are juſtly entitled to diſtinction, both for the purity of their doctrines, and elegance in ſtyle, are among the number of thoſe who have ſupported this work: but we believe, that thoſe who appear in the following pages, will be pronounced to have well ſupported the cauſe they were ſo indulgent as to undertake.

Such has been the reception of our plan in the preſent inſtance, that we feel ourſelves juſtified in announcing to the public, a FOURTH VOLUME; and, in a word, a SUCCESSION of volumes, ſo long as the preſent diſpoſition to encourage the work ſhall continue.

In ſupport of this plan we plead an inclination, more fully, to execute the objects juſt now recited, as giving origin to the work; and we add, a deſire:

I. To form ſuch a collection of diſcourſes, as may amount to a ſyſtem of Chriſtian faith and practice.

II. By this ſyſtem to raiſe an oppoſition to error and hereſy of every kind.

III. To direct the preſent prevailing diſpoſition to liberality in matters of religion, into a proper channel; and open the door for Chriſtian communion, upon principles ACKNOWLEDGED and UNDERSTOOD.

IV. To lay a foundation for the univerſal agreement of the Chriſtian Church, when the high proſpects of futurity ſhall be unfolded.

We pretend not to a ſpirit of prophecy, but find a willingneſs to hazard a conjecture, that, under the ſupreme and ſuperintending providence of God, ſome ſuch ſmall beginnings or dawnings of light, may, eventually, be conſidered as announcing the approach of MERIDIAN DAY.

We are not backward to ſay, that ſuch religious union, and influence as this work labors to accompliſh, will add no ſmall DIGNITY and SUPPORT to the POLITICAL INTERESTS of our country. To the influence of law, it will add the energy of conſcience and moral duty; to the ſubject, it will adminiſter ſafety and protection from the encroachments of arbitrary power; and to

all under its influence, will ſhed the richeſt of CIVIL and SOCIAL bleſſings.*

WITH the deepeſt veneration, we DEDICATE our labors, and thoſe of our brethren, to the GOOD PROVIDENCE of ALMIGHTY GOD, and to the PATRONAGE of the PIOUS of every denomination, into whoſe hands this work may come—truſting, that thoſe who favor it, will, in the peruſal, find their

* "A tranſient view of thoſe ſtates and kingdoms, which have "made the moſt ſtriking figure in the hiſtory of the world, and "which have been moſt renowned for the felicity of their govern- "ment, will convince us that Religion was by them, always, con- "ſidered as a matter of great importance to CIVIL SOCIETY.

"The greateſt politicians, and moſt celebrated legiſlators of an- "tiquity, depended much on this, to give ſanction to their laws, "and make them operate with vigor and facility."

REESE: *On the Influence of Religion in Civil Society.*

"Our holy Religion, by regulating and compoſing the paſſions, "enlightening and exalting the mind, and purifying and meliorat- "ing the heart, conduces in a high degree to the peace and well- "being of ſocial life: It makes good men—from thence, the tranſi- "tion is eaſy and natural to regular citizens and obedient ſubjects. "Where private virtue cannot be found, it is in vain to look for "public: and laws are of little efficacy without good example."

Governor PATTERSON's *Anſwer to the Congratulatory Addreſs of the Preſbytery of New-Brunſwick.*

"Another important conſequence of this diſcovery, is an enlarg- "ed liberality of ſentiment among men. The liberality to which "I refer, is diſcernable in the ſpirit of religious toleration, which "ſpreads like a flood over the face of the earth. This toleration, "when it becomes univerſal, cannot but accompliſh matters of the "higheſt importance to the WORLD. Truth and reaſon will then "burſt with irreſiſtible energy from the dark clouds of ſuperſtition "and bigotry—diſpel the miſts of error and abſurdity, and bring "the GREAT FAMILY OF THE WORLD, to an uniformity of religi- "ous belief and worſhip."

ALFRED: *On the Progreſs of true Principles of Freedom, and good Government.*

attention amply rewarded; and, in the end, enjoy the high proſpects it permits them to entertain.

WE return our grateful acknowledgments to thoſe REVEREND GENTLEMEN who have contributed to the execution of this work thus far—not doubting, that the contemplation of having added ſomething to the ſupport of the great truths of the goſpel—of having adminiſtered inſtruction to the ignorant, warning to the impious, and edification to the ſaints—but above all, the contemplation of having laid a foundation for the progreſs, unity, and perfection of the kingdom of the Redeemer, will afford higher reward for their ſervices, than it is in our power to give.

In behalf of the intereſts of this work,
ſubſcribe
to the cauſe of truth, a friend,
and to the public,
a devoted ſervant—

DAVID AUSTIN.

Elizabeth-Town,
Jan. 1, 1791.

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SERMON I.

ON

MINISTERIAL CHARACTER AND DUTY.

BY

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. L.L.D.
Col. N. C. P.

2 COR. iv. 13.
We alſo believe, and therefore ſpeak.

TO underſtand what ought to be the character, and what principles ſhould animate the conduct of a Miniſter of the Goſpel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Chriſtian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called, in providence, to make a choice. It will teach him to hold ſuch in reputation for their office-ſake, and to improve the privilege of a regular goſpel miniſtry, if he himſelf is favored with it. And I think it muſt incline him to make daily ſupplication to the Lord of the harveſt, to ſend forth faithful laborers into his harveſt.

But though there were no ſuch general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aſpect of this audience, would eaſily juſtify me in making this, for once, the immediate ſubject of diſcourſe.

Now if we would know the character of a faithful Miniſter, we cannot better, or more immediately reach our purpoſe, than by looking into the character, and obſerving the conduct, and ſprings of action, of the Apoſtles of our Lord, who received their commiſſions immediately from himſelf, and were not only the firſt, but the beſt and moſt ſucceſsful Miniſters, that ever were employed in the church of Chriſt.

The Apoſtle Paul, whoſe call was ſo ſingular, and whoſe labors were ſo diſtinguiſhed, has, in his Epiſtles to the ſeveral churches, planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exerciſe of the miniſtry. In this chapter, and the preceding part of this Epiſtle, he ſhews the Corinthians, with what viſible faithfulneſs and ſincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had uſed in promoting their eternal happineſs.

To ſave time, I forbear going through the connection of his diſcourſe and only obſerve, that in the words of our text, he ſhows what kept him faithful and influenced him to ſo much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expreſſion in the 116th Pſalm. It is written, *I have believed, therefore have I ſpoken. We alſo believe, and therefore ſpeak.* In this he intimates, that our inward perſuaſion of the great truths of the everlaſting Goſpel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others, to preſs the important meſſage, and watch over the ſouls of thoſe committed to their charge.

In diſcourſing further at this time, I intend to confine myſelf to this ſingle truth, which may be eaſily

deduced from the text: That one of the moſt eſſentially neceſſary, and the moſt extenſively uſeful qualifications of a good Miniſter, is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that Goſpel he is called to preach, and a lively ſenſe of religion upon his own heart. After I ſhall have explained and confirmed this obſervation, I will conclude with ſome practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the moſt eſſentially neceſſary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a ſtrict ſenſe, gifts are more neceſſary to the being of the miniſtry than even grace itſelf. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward ſtate of the adminiſtrator, is a Popiſh error, and is expreſsly guarded againſt by the Aſſembly of Divines, in our ſhorter Catechiſms, in the following words: *The Sacraments*, and it is equally true of every other ordinance, *become effectual to Salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth adminiſter them, but only by the bleſſing of Chriſt, and the working of his ſpirit in them, that by faith receive them.*

But ſome degree of capacity is evidently neceſſary in the moſt abſolute ſenſe. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a ſaint, but cannot be a Miniſter. This conceſſion, however, takes nothing from the force of the obſervation, that real Religion is of the greateſt importance, and moſt abſolutely neceſſary to the *faithful* diſcharge of a Miniſter's ſacred truſt. That I may ſet this in as clear and ſtrong a light as I

am able, let me intreat your attention to the following obſervations:

I. Real Religion in a Miniſter will make him knowing, and able for his work. It is neceſſary for any one who intends himſelf for the office of the miniſtry, by diligent ſtudy, and the uſe of thoſe means, with which God in his Providence hath furniſhed him, to improve his underſtanding and acquire a ſtock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In this he can have no ſuch incitement as concern for his Maſter's Glory. Nay, he that is truly religious, is taught of God the beſt of Maſter's, and will have ſome of his moſt profitable leſſons from his own experience.

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that thoſe who are moſt apt to diſparage piety are alſo apt to ſpeak in terms of high approbation on the ſubject of literature and ſcience—Obſerve, therefore, that true religion ſerves both to give a man that knowledge which is neceſſary to a Miniſter, and to direct and turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwiſe acquire. It is an approved maxim in every ſcience, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely ſpeculative; at leaſt, tho' the laſt may make the prettieſt ſhow, the firſt, is by much to be preferred for uſe. Any wiſe man, if he was to go a dangerous voyage, would readily prefer as his pilot, one, who had much experience, and had ſailed often that way himſelf, to one, who had ſtudied navigation in the moſt perfect

manner aſhore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his ſoul would chooſe for his *ſpiritual* guide, one, who appears to have the wiſdom to ſave his own, and would expect by him to be beſt directed, how to avoid the rocks and ſhelves in his paſſage, thro' this dangerous and tempeſtuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other ſcience, it holds yet more ſtrongly in Religion, which cannot be truly known unleſs it be felt. There is an inſeparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a ſtranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not inſenſible that a bad man may eſpouſe, and plead for a great part of the ſyſtem of divine truth; but as he cannot cordially embrace it, ſo I am inclined to think that he never truly underſtands it. The Apoſtle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God which is given to every real Chriſtian, and more eſpecially to every faithful Miniſter, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of Divine Things, *Now we have received, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things we ſpeak, not in the words which man's wiſdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth, comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them for they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* As the real Chriſtian from that character is beſt diſpoſed to ſeek after, ſo he is by the ſame means beſt fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of ſpiritual things. This will appear, if we conſider what ought to be the

great work of a Miniſter. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and conſciences of his people. His buſineſs is to convince the ungodly; to awaken the ſecure; to enlighten the ignorant; to direct and ſtrengthen the weak in the faith, and in general as a wiſe phyſician, to adminiſter the medicine proper to the various conditions and diſorders of his hearers. Now it muſt, at firſt ſight, appear, that he who is a ſtranger to the power of godlineſs, and knows nothing of the ſpiritual life himſelf, muſt be utterly unfit for diſcerning how it thrives, or aſſiſting and promoting it in others. That man muſt ſurely be moſt powerful in ſearching, and moſt ſkilful in guiding the conſciences of others, who has been accuſtomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther obſerve upon this particular, that true Religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwiſe acquire. It is a great miſtake to think, ſound learning is an enemy to Religion, and to ſuppoſe that an ignorant miniſtry is the beſt or ſafeſt. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a Divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others; tho' ſome of them are more important than others; and it is neceſſary to give to any of them, only ſuch proportion of our time, as is conſiſtent with our great and principal aim. Now true Religion is the great preſervative againſt miſtake or abuſe of any kind on this ſubject. A bad man is apt to ſtudy, merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a falſe luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad

man is alſo exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and ſelf-ſufficiency; than which, there is not a vice more dangerous in itſelf, or more contrary to the character of a Miniſter of the New Teſtament. But he who is ſanctified by Divine Grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, ſo the ſingle purpoſe to which he will wiſh to apply it, is to ſerve God in the Goſpel of his Son.

II. Real Religion in a Miniſter will make him happy and chearful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt, and ſpeedy obedience of a ſervant who loves his maſter and his work, and the reluctant labor of him who only deceives him, that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man undertakes the office of the miniſtry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his intereſt in the world: viz. the welfare of the ſouls of men. An unholy Miniſter undertakes this employment only as a trade to earn by, and has it at leaſt as his higheſt aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is eaſy to ſee in what a different manner theſe different perſons will act, and in what different light they will view the ſacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the Goſpel and loves its Author, will reckon it his higheſt honor when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleaſure in carrying his meſſage; beſides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with chearfulneſs every fatigue he is ſubjected to, in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary

principle, tho' he is obliged, that he may raiſe his wages, in ſome ſort to do his duty; yet how heavily muſt it go on, how tedious and burthenſome muſt it be, both in preparation and performance? He will count his ſervice at the Altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can ſave for himſelf, from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that there lies a ſtrong objection againſt this obſervation from experience; as it appears that ſuch Miniſters as have leaſt of Religion, commonly go moſt lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burthen in what is committed to them; whereas the moſt pious and faithful Miniſters ſeem to have a weight upon their ſpirits, and ſuch a concern for the ſalvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their chearfulneſs in the work to which they are called. In anſwer to this, obſerve, that an unfaithful Miniſter is not eaſy and chearful becauſe his work is agreeable to him, but becauſe he takes as little of it as may be, and ſeeks his pleaſure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the miniſtry muſt be irkſome and uneaſy to him that believes not, except ſo far as he makes it ſubſervient to ambition, and diſplays his own talents when he ſhould be feeding his people's ſouls. This I confeſs, which the Apoſtle juſtly calls preaching ourſelves, may be abundantly gratifying to the moſt corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart of every faithful paſtor, is far from being inconſiſtent with the moſt ſolid peace and deſirable pleaſure ariſ-

ing from the diſcharge of his duty. It is like the exerciſe of pity and compaſſion to the diſtreſſed, in him, who is acting for their relief, which, though in ſome ſenſe painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God, and conſcience, as flowing from a rightly diſpoſed mind, and therefore to be cheriſhed and cultivated rather than ſuppreſſed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more ſalutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, *to give unto them beauty for aſhes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs.*

III. Real Religion in a Miniſter will make him faithful, and impartial, in the diſcharge of his truſt. The God in whoſe preſence we ſtand, and in whoſe name we ſpeak, is no reſpecter of perſons, and neither ſhould we be in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of perſons, of different ſtations and of different characters, committed to the inſpection of a Miniſter; the pleaſing or diſpleaſing of whom, has a conſiderable influence in his worldly eaſe and intereſt. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to ſpeak unto them *ſmooth things*, and *prophecy deceit*; or at leaſt, not to deal with all that freedom and impartiality, that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly intereſt in one ſhape or another, either vanity or gain, is the ſupreme motive of action: And therefore, as moſt men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that an unſanctified Miniſter

will venture to provoke their diſpleaſure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favor of the great, or the applauſe of the multitude, he certainly will ſeek, more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulneſs and boldneſs. He will remember that if he ſeeks to pleaſe men, he cannot be the ſervant of Chriſt. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wiſh to obtain their favor, than as a diligent diſcharge of his duty approves him to their conſciences in the ſight of God; or forces the approbation of the impartial, notwithſtanding the reſentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God, can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God, are wholly delivered from it: but ſurely, bad men, muſt be far more under the government of this ſinful principle. The one may fail occaſionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reaſons which incline me particularly to inſiſt on that faithfulneſs, which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be uſeful, muſt be very particular, and cloſe, in the application. General truths and abſtract reaſoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wiſe will not, apply them to themſelves.

2. The other reaſon is, that private admonition, and perſonal reproof, are a great part of a Miniſter's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man, who hath not a ſteady regard to the preſence and command of that God, who hath ſet him to watch for the ſouls of his people, as one that muſt give an account

IV. Real Religion in a Miniſter, will make him active, and laborious in his work. Diligence is abſolutely neceſſary, to the right diſcharge of the paſtoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no ſmall attention and labor, to ſeek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expreſſes it, to ſtir up the attention of the inconſiderate, to awaken ſecure, and convince obſtinate ſinners, to unmaſk the covered hearts of hypocrites, to ſet right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving Miniſter, muſt be careleſs and ſlothful. As he is unconcerned about the ſucceſs of his work; he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he, who believes the unſpeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himſelf, and to his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows that he himſelf muſt anſwer to God, for the care he has taken of the ſouls committed to his charge; and that if he does not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

Oh! my brethren, what a ſtriking conſideration is this, to ſuppoſe ourſelves interrogated by the Supreme Judge, concerning every ſinner under our charge? Did you earneſtly warn this unhappy ſoul, by earneſt exhortations in public, and by ſerious affectionate expoſtulations in private, to conſider his ways? It is an eaſy thing, by a partial, or curſory performance of our duty, to ſcreen ourſelves from the cenſure of our fellow-men; but to ſtand at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, and anſwer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not alſo a concern for his people's intereſt, animate a pious Miniſter to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God, he loves his brother alſo. The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men.* If a man in good earneſt, believes, that everlaſting miſery muſt be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed ſtate; what pains will he not take, to prevent ſinners from going to that place of torment?

One who could ſee a fellow-creature, in the rage of a fever, ruſhing to the brink of a precipice, and not reſtrain him, would fall under laſting infamy. Muſt not the ſame compaſſion move the heart of a ſerious perſon, who ſees his fellow-ſinners, going blindfold to the pit of perdition?

It is their not believing theſe things, that makes them ſo fearleſs in ſinning; if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them? There are no motives like theſe to diligence—he that believes, will certainly ſpeak.

V. In the laſt place, real Religion, will make a Miniſter ſucceſsful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illuſtrated above, and as it adds to his precepts, *the force of his example.* Firſt, it makes him ſucceſsful as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the bleſſing upon a Miniſter's labors, and that he can ſave by many, or by few, by the weakeſt, as well as by the ableſt inſtrument: yet we ſee from experience, that in all ordinary caſes, he proportions the ſucceſs, to the propriety, or ſufficien-

cy of the means. Neither is there any ſurer mark, that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world, or the church, than when he raiſes, and commiſſions men, eminently qualified, to plead his cauſe. Therefore, real piety, even in this reſpect, contributes to a Miniſter's ſucceſs. If diligence in all other things produces ſucceſs, it muſt be ſo alſo in the miniſtry. If he that lays out his ground with the greateſt judgment, prepares and dreſſes it with the greateſt care, has the moſt plentiful crop: if the ſhepherd that waits moſt diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the beſt paſture, and leads them to the ſafeſt ſhelter, has the moſt increaſe; then that Miniſter, who does his duty moſt wiſely, and moſt powerfully, will alſo ſee moſt of the fruit of his labors.

But real, and unaffected, yet viſible ſerioufneſs, has alſo its own proper additional influence on a Miniſter's ſucceſs. An apparent and viſible impreſſion upon the ſpeaker's mind, of what he ſays, gives it an inexpreſſible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force, in that which flows from the heart, which diſtinguiſhes it not only from the coldneſs of indifference, but alſo, from the falſe fire of enthuſiaſm or vain glory. Beſides all this, the example of a pious Miniſter, is a conſtant inſtruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine, while he not only charges them to do what he ſays, but to be what he is. This will receive much illuſtration from its contrary.

A Miniſter who has a careleſs, untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reaſon, it cannot juſtify any one in diſobeying

wholeſome inſtructions; that the inſtructor deſpiſes them himſelf; yet it is one of the moſt common excuſes men make for themſelves, and few excuſes ſeem to ſet their conſciences more at eaſe. Looſe and careleſs perſons, think themſelves quite at liberty to deſpiſe the reproofs of their paſtor, if, while he teaches others, he teaches not himſelf.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even thoſe who have the greateſt regard for Religion, are not ſo much affected with the ſame truths, when ſpoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when ſpoken by one, who ſeems to feel what he ſpeaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reaſoning—for wherever an eminently pious Miniſter has lived, and labored long, there is commonly to be found the moſt knowing, ſerious, ſober-minded, and judicious people; nay, the very memory of ſuch a Miniſter, is often long continued, after he is gone, and his example is propoſed by his hearers, to their children's children.

From all theſe conſiderations, I conclude, that the moſt important qualification of a good Miniſter, is, to be *a believing preacher*, and that, if he ſaves his own ſoul, he will be the probable mean of ſaving them that hear him.

I proceed now, to make ſome improvement of the ſubject.

Reverend fathers and brethren,

As we would wiſh our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application

to ourſelves, of what hath been ſaid upon the ſubject. Let it engage us to a ſerious examination of ourſelves, leſt while we preach the goſpel to others, we ourſelves ſhould be reprobates. This ought to be the ſubject of our frequent and ſerious thoughts, for ſeveral reaſons. We are in danger of thinking ourſelves too eaſily ſafe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itſelf, even from ſecular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane ſinners. We are in danger of miſtaking our frequent thinking and ſpeaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true Religion, in ourſelves. We may alſo, perhaps, miſtake thoſe gifts with which God hath furniſhed us, for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the ſpirit, and of gracious diſpoſitions in our hearts. A Miniſter, is as much liable to ſelf-deceit as others, and in ſome reſpects, more ſo. We have therefore much need, often to make trial of our ſtate, as well as to give all diligence, to make our calling and election ſure.

But let us beware of imagining, that this diſcourſe is only applicable to ſuch, as have no real faith in Chriſt. God forbid! that there were any Miniſter among us, a complete unbeliever, counting the Goſpel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious diſpoſition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and ſtrength; and in proportion to the ſtrength of our faith, and the impreſſion we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and conſequently our ſucceſs, in the work of the miniſtry. Let us therefore impreſs our minds, with a more and

more lively ſenſe, of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not ſtarve ourſelves, while we are feeding others: but ſtudy to arrive at a greater degree of love to God, and delight in him; a greater conformity to his bleſſed image, in purity of heart, and integrity of life. Let us in a ſpecial manner, ſtudy to attain to more and more intimate communion with God in ſecret, which is the ſign of our dependance upon him, and the very exerciſe of love to him, which is the mean of conſtancy, and the ſource of joy in Religion.

Above all, let us ſet our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer ſits, at his father's right hand. As our profeſſion is to be pilgrims, and ſtrangers int he earth, to live by faith, and not by ſight; let us ſtudy, to raiſe our hopes of, and deſire after, the heavenly inheritance. By this, we ſhall not only believe, but know, and feel the value of true Religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in ſeeking the good of others.

Oh! my brethren, what reaſon have we to be inwardly aſhamed at the weakneſs of our faith, and the coldneſs of our love, as they ſhew themſelves, by our indifference in the duties of our office? We are often ready, both to complain, and wonder that our hearers are ſo little affected with the moſt awful conſiderations: that they can hear with indifference of everlaſting happineſs, and ſet without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath: that we cannot perſuade them, it is of importance to think what ſhall become of them forever. But is it not alſo to be wondered at, that we ourſelves can often ſpeak of-

theſe things, with ſo little emotion? Can we ever be ſufficiently affected, with the danger of our hearers, when we conſider, that we muſt either ſave them by convincing and converting them now, or deliver our own ſouls, by witneſſing, juſtifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the laſt day? However plain and ſimple theſe truths are, of the final judgment of miniſters and people, they are quite unfathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is ſtrange that we can think of them without the deepeſt concern, or even ſpeak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would increaſe our faith, that believing we may ſpeak, and that our ſpeech may be with ſuch efficacy, by the bleſſing of God, as many ſinners may be thereby brought to everlaſting life; that we may approve ourſelves to him that ſent us; and that when Chriſt, the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, we may receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.

SERMON II.

MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE.

BY

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. L.L.D.

Col. N. C. P.

REV. iii. 17.

Becauſe thou ſayeſt I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

IN order to preach the Goſpel with ſucceſs, it is neceſſary that we ſhould begin, by eſtabliſhing the great and fundamental truths, on which all the reſt are built, and to which they conſtantly refer. Nay, it is neceſſary, that we ſhould often look back to theſe, and ſee that we be not off the foundation, or that it be not weakly, or imperfectly laid. Of this ſort, I take the guilt, miſery, and weakneſs of our nature to be; and therefore have choſen the words now read, as the ſubject of diſcourſe, in which the ſpirit of God reproves the ſufficiency, and ſelf-righteouſneſs of the church of Laodicea.

Becauſe thou ſayeſt I am rich, and increaſed in goods, &c. I ſuppoſe you will all eaſily underſtand, that the words are figurative, and are ſpoken entirely, with a view to the ſpiritual ſtate of that Church. In this light, let us conſider what is preciſely their meaning.

We may either ſuppoſe, that this charge is brought againſt the church of Laodicea, becauſe there were many there, under the profeſſion of the Goſpel, who were notwithſtanding, ſtill in a natural unrenewed ſtate—ſtrangers to the power of Religion; of which, their being thus unhumbled, and inſenſible of their guilt, and miſery, was the evidence; and for which, the remedy is preſcribed, in the following words: *I council thee to buy of me gold, tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich, and white raiment that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee.*

Or we may ſuppoſe, that this reproof, was in a great meaſure applicable to them all, in general; believers and unbelievers; the beſt of them, being exceedingly prone to truſt in themſelves, that they were righteous; inſtead of that humble dependance on the merit, and grace of their Redeemer, which ought not only to be the refuge of the ſinner, but the confidence of the ſaint. And there is no queſtion, that this is a proper caution to profeſſing Chriſtians in every age, to beware of ſplitting on the rock of ſelf-ſufficiency.

But as this diſpoſition reigns in the heart of every one, that is yet at a diſtance from God—is the foundation of their ſecurity and impenitence, and is what they muſt be brought off from, before they can be reconciled to God; it is for their benefit, that I chiefly deſign this diſcourſe, though it may alſo be uſeful, and ſhall be in part applied to the children of God. It is an affecting thought, when purſued to its conſequences; yet alas! it is unqueſtionably true, that in every aſſembly, *ſuch as this*, of profeſſing Chriſtians, there are not a few, who are in *the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity*, under the wrath of God, and liable to the condemning ſentence of his law; and at the ſame time, that the far greateſt part of them are ignorant of it, and know not, that they are *wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

In diſcourſing farther upon this ſubject therefore, I ſhall

I. Endeavor to prove and illuſtrate this truth: that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God.

II. I ſhall briefly ſhew you, that being brought to a lively ſenſe, and genuine conviction of this, is the firſt, and a neceſſary ſtep, to the ſaving knowledge of God, in Chriſt---And in the *laſt place*, ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. In the firſt place then, I am to prove and illuſtrate this truth; that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God. What is ſaid in this paſſage of the Laodiceans, is univerſally true, of the poſterity of Adam. Unleſs an inward and eſſential change has been wrought upon them by the grace of God; they are *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It is alſo true of them, as well as the Laodiceans, that they know it not; but vainly preſume themſelves to be rich, and increaſed with goods, and to have need of nothing. If theſe two things are jointly true of many of you my hearers, there is nothing in which you can have ſo great a concern: therefore, let me earneſtly beſeech your moſt ſerious attention, to what ſhall be ſaid: as the ſucceſs of this conviction is neceſſary, to your underſtanding, or profiting by any other part of divine truth, as I ſhall afterwards ſhew you.

The proof of the truth here aſſerted, can be only of two kinds. 1. From ſcripture, which is the teſtimony of God declaring it. 2. From the viſible ſtate of the world, and our own experience, finding it to be ſo.

1. That all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, appears from the expreſs, and repeated teſtimony of the word of God. And this teſtimony we have, not only in particular paſſages, carrying the truth, but in the ſtrain and ſpirit of

the whole, and the ſeveral diſpenſations of Divine Providence there recorded; which are all of them, built upon this ſuppoſition, and intended to remedy this univerſal evil.

See what God declares: Gen. vi. 5. *And God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually.* And again, *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* We may take the pſalmiſt David's teſtimony of himſelf, as a ſample, of the reſt of mankind; and indeed he plainly intimates, that it is a common calamity. *Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Behold! I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me.*

We may take alſo the teſtimony of the Apoſtle Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, which is the more full to our preſent purpoſe: that as he had never been at Rome, he is there laying the foundation of religion in general, and the Chriſtian diſpenſation in particular, by a clear, and explicit proof, of the need the world had of a Saviour, from its univerſal corruption and depravity. See then what he ſays---*What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wiſe, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under ſin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.* And again---*Now we know that what things ſoever the law ſaith: it ſaith to them who under the law, that every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world may be-*

come guilty, before God.---For all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God.

You may alſo ſee, that the Apoſtle traces this diſorder, to its very ſource---*Wherefore as by one man, ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin: and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.*

I ſhall add but one expreſs ſcripture teſtimony more.---*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.*

But beſides the particular paſſages of ſcripture, poſitively declaring this truth, the whole frame and contexture of the ſcriptures, and all the diſpenſations of Divine Providence recorded in them, are a proof of the ſame thing. Man is every where conſidered as in a fallen and ſinful ſtate. Every thing that is preſcribed to him, and every thing that is done for him, goes upon that ſuppoſition. It is not one man, or a few men, that are in ſcripture called to repentance, but all without exception. Now repentance is only the duty of a ſinner. An innocent perſon cannot repent; he has nothing to grieve for in his heart, or to forſake in his life. It is alſo proper to obſerve, that one of the ſcripture characters of God is, *Merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* Now, he could not be to us a forgiving God, and there would be no need that he ſhould be revealed under that character, unleſs we were ſinners, that ſtood in need of pardon. Mercy, indeed, is the diſtinguiſhing attribute of God, and this can only

have reſpect to offenders. All the other perfections of God, might be exerciſed towards pure and holy creatures; but mercy, only towards ſinners. He might be a good, holy, juſt, wiſe, powerful God, to perſons in a ſtate of innocence, but he can ſhew mercy, only to the guilty.

Do not the diſpenſations of God's Providence, ſhew the ſame thing? He ſent the flood, as a teſtimony of the wickedneſs of the world, and for the puniſhment of a guilty race. Remember alſo the ſacrifices, which were appointed, and accepted by God from the beginning of the world. Sacrifices are for atonement, and expiation. They are plainly a ſubſtitution in the room of a forfeited life. It is doing violence to common ſenſe, to make them any thing elſe. The whole Jewiſh œconomy, which had in it ſo many ſacrifices, ſo many offerings, ſo many waſhings and purifications, does plainly ſuppoſe, the perſon uſing them, to be infected with ſin, or moral pollution. Had not this been the caſe, they had been extremely abſurd, and improper.

But the ſtrongeſt teſtimony of all, that God hath given to the guilt, and corruption of mankind, is his ſending his own Son into the world, to redeem them by the ſacrifice of himſelf---To what purpoſe redeem them, if they were not in bondage? Why ſo coſtly an expiation, if our lives had not been forfeited to Divine Juſtice? But that it was for this purpoſe, that Chriſt came into the world,

is ſo plain, from the whole of the ſcriptures, that I ſhall ſelect but one paſſage out of many, to prove it---*Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs, for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God.*

What is ſaid already on this head, is a full proof from ſcripture, that man is now, by nature, in a ſtate of ſin; that he is alſo, in conſequence of that, in a ſtate of miſery, and liable to the wrath of God, is proved by many of the ſame paſſages, and by many others---*For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs---For the wages of ſin is death, &c.* But I need not multiply paſſages to this purpoſe; for in all God's diſpenſations, the deſerved puniſhment of ſinners, is as evident, as their ſinfulneſs itſelf. It is indeed fully proved, from the eſſential perfections of God, particularly his holineſs and juſtice. He is of purer eyes, than that he can behold iniquity. *Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools*, that is, ſinners, *ſtand in his ſight.*

Is not all this then my brethren, a ſufficient proof, from the teſtimony of God, that man in a natural ſtate, is ſinful and miſerable? Shall we affirm ourſelves to be whole, if he ſaith we are unſound? Do we know more than God? Will we not give credit to the fountain of truth? Nor is it any objection to this, that we ourſelves know it

not, or are but little ſenſible of it. One conſiderable part of the diſeaſe, is blindneſs of underſtanding: ſo that we may, and muſt, till our eyes are opened, be ignorant of our danger---We may think and ſay, that we are rich, and increaſed in goods, and have need of nothing, while we are, *wretched and miſerable, and blind and naked.*

2. The ſame thing appears from the viſible ſtate of the world, and our own experience. Unbelievers are apt to hear with indifference and neglect, what they are told from ſcripture teſtimony, unleſs otherwiſe confirmed to them; and it is with the unbeliever we have now to do. Beſides, the eſtabliſhment of this truth, upon other evidence than that of ſcripture, ought to have a powerful influence, in inducing men to believe the other truths in ſcripture, that are connected with and founded upon it. I think it therefore, highly proper, to lay before you what evidence we have of our loſt ſtate, from the obſervation of the world, though the ſcriptures had been ſilent. I would likewiſe recommend to all, what ſhall be ſaid on this ſubject, to preſerve your faith unſhaken, and keep you from blaſphemous, unbelieving thoughts, if at any time, you ſhould be tempted to them: ſince, even unenlightened reaſon, confirms the foundation of divine truth, and nature, and providence conſpire, in preaching the Doctrine of Divine Grace.

Now, doth not our experience, as well as the obſervation of others, ſhew us, that we are born in

ſin, and conceived in iniquity? May we not ſay from our own knowledge, that the imaginations of the heart of man, are only evil from his youth, and that continually? Is there not a proneneſs, and tendency to evil, univerſally to be obſerved, in mankind? and a backwardneſs and averſion to that which is good? Is not this apparent even in children, upon the firſt dawn of reaſon in their minds, and the firſt ſight of choice or inclination in their hearts? Surely it muſt be owned, that in that early period, they are at leaſt *comparatively* innocent—If any among us, is without ſin, it muſt be the youngeſt; *yet folly is bound in the heart of a child.*--- How hard is it to guard them from evil, and to inſpire them with good diſpoſitions, even by the wiſeſt, and earlieſt care, in their inſtruction? And even after the moſt ſucceſsful pains, are there not ſtill many remaining blemiſhes, through the prevalence of corrupt nature, which ſhew, that the ground-work itſelf, was faulty? But on the contrary, how eaſily do men learn, that which is evil? Do they need to be taught? Is it not enough to give them licence? How juſt is that deſcription in Jeremiah? *They are wiſe to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* I am far from denying, that men are improved and forwarded in ſin, by inſtruction and example, as well as in that, which is good: but it is plain, they are far apter ſcholars, in the firſt, than in the laſt; which plainly ſhews, they are more powerfully diſpoſed to it, by nature. Nay, is it not evident, from the univerſal experi-

ence, and teſtimony of thoſe, who act from a principle of Religion; that it is extremely difficult, with all the care they can take, to reſiſt the propenſity of nature, to the contrary? And that in the beſt, it often gets the ſuperiority, when they are off their guard? Is not this an evidence of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and its tendency to evil? Are thoſe who hate ſin, often overcome by it, and ſhall thoſe who love it, preſume to ſay, they are free from it?

If any ſhould aſk, how I prove that that courſe of action, to which human nature is inclined is evil, without the aſſiſtance of ſcripture? I anſwer, from reaſon; and that many ways—from its pernicious effects on ſocieties, and private perſons; from the teſtimony of the world in general, when others, than themſelves, are concerned, and from the teſtimony of every man's conſcience, in his own caſe. Who is there, that does not often feel in himſelf, a powerful tendency to what he cannot but in his heart condemn? Is not his conſcience God's vicegerent? and doth not natural religion, as well as the religion of Chriſt, declare him corrupt? So that I may ſay with the Apoſtle Paul, not citing the paſſage as a proof, but as an illuſtration and deſcription of the character, and ſtate of natural men---*For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law: theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written*

in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts, the mean while, accuſing or elſe excuſing one another.

Thus there is as much light remaining with us ſince the fall, as to ſhew, that we are out of the way, but not to bring us back to it again.

As a ſerious conſideration of the ſtate of the wicked, may ſhew us our natural impurity: ſo it hath been long ago diſcovered, and confeſſed by many of the ancient heathens, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, nor knew of the remedy. Theſe, diſcerning by nature, the perfectly pure, and holy nature of God, and comparing it with the diſpoſitions prevalent in man, could not reconcile them together; but concluded, that a creature, ſo corrupt, could not come in that condition, out of the hands of its Creator. This difficulty ſome of them endeavored to ſolve, by a ſtate of pre-exiſtence; which bears ſome reſemblance to the true ſolution, given of it in the holy ſcripture: viz. the apoſtacy of our firſt parents; which entailed a corrupted nature upon their poſterity, in which, the light of nature, and revealed truth, ſeem almoſt wholly, to coincide.

It is to the ſame thing that I cannot help attributing the practice, that ſo univerſally prevailed over the heathen world, before the coming of Chriſt, *of offering ſacrifices*, to appeaſe the wrath of the Deity, ſuppoſed to be offended. That the

cuſtom of ſacrificing, prevailed very generally, perhaps univerſally among the heathen nations, at the greateſt diſtance from, and having no correſpondence with each other, is a certain and unqueſtionable fact. Neither do I ſee to what cauſe we can aſcribe it, unleſs to one of theſe two; either an ancient tradition, from the beginning of the world, and ſpread with the inhabitants, through the ſeveral parts of it, as they ſeparated and peopled it; or to the common condition of human nature, which dictated the ſame thing, to perſons, in ſuch diſtant places.

If the firſt of theſe ſuppoſitions is embraced, which indeed I ſuppoſe to be the truth, it appears that ſacrifices were appointed by God to man, in his fallen ſtate, for the pardon of ſin, and that they had reference, to the great propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt, upon the croſs.

If we prefer the laſt ſuppoſition, it would ſeem as if the conſciouſneſs of guilt, had uniformly prompted men in all ages, and nations, to offer up ſome atonement for their offences. In both caſes, it equally ſerves, to prove the corruption, and ſinfulneſs of human nature.

Now as what hath been ſaid, plainly proves the impurity of man, in his natural ſtate: ſo his miſery and liableneſs to puniſhment, may alſo be proved; both as a natural conſequence of his ſinfulneſs, and even, more plainly, by itſelf. There is not only a conſiderable degree of actual miſery in

the world, but plain prefages of more to follow it in the world to come. Need I take up much time, in enumerating the feveral miferies, and calamities, incident to human life? Are not oppreffion and injury from one another, poverty, ficknefs, pain, and death, the plain fruits of fin, and vifible tokens of God's difpleafure? Man with fome marks of fuperiority and excellence of nature, is even, by means of his fuperiority, his knowledge, and foreſight of his own fufferings, more miferable, than any other of the creatures, that is equally fubject to the ftroke of death.

To the whole, I fhall only fubjoin one conſideration more, which is applicable to both parts of the argument---I have often thought, that the *natural terror and fear with which men are poſſeſt, of the preſence of God, or any remarkable token of his power, is nothing elſe, but an indication of guilt, or an apprehenſion of wrath.*

You may fee fome incidents in fcripture, from which it is natural to conclude; that when God makes any vifible manifeftation of his glory, or fends any of his Angels or Miniſters from Heaven to Earth; thofe who are prefent, are filled with the utmoft dread and terror.

Thus in the relation given of God's appearance upon Mount Sinai, it is faid: *And fo terrible was the ſight, that Moſes ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake,* See another example, in Iſaiah---*Then ſaid I, woe*

is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of Hoſts. And in the New Teſtament, in the Apoſtle John---*And when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

And is not this always the caſe, in all ages, that upon any remarkable appearance of an inhabitant of the other world, or even when any ſuch thing is falſely apprehended the inhabitants of this world are filled with extraordinary terror? What is this do you imagine, but conſciouſneſs of guilt, and apprehenſion of vengeance?

Innocence has no enemy, and it has nothing to fear. We are all in much the ſame caſe with Adam, immediately after his firſt tranſgreſſion; when he heard God's voice in the garden, *he was afraid, and fled, and hid himſelf*---We read of no ſuch fear poſſeſſing him, while he retained his innocence, but as ſoon as he had ſinned, he began to dread an avenging God.

From all this then, I would conclude, that reaſon accords with ſcripture, in ſaying, that *all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God*: that man in a natural ſtate, is *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind and naked.*

SERMON III.

AN INDUCEMENT TO COME TO CHRIST.

BY

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. L.L.D.

Col. N. C. P.

REV. iii. 17.

Becauſe thou ſayeſt I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

HAVING in a former diſcourſe, proved, and illuſtrated this truth; that all mankind are by nature, in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God:—I proceed now to the *ſecond thing* propoſed, which was to ſhew you, that being brought to a lively ſenſe, and genuine conviction of this, is the firſt, and a neceſſary ſtep, to the ſaving knowledge of God, in Chriſt.

On this, I ſhall not need to ſpend much time, as it is ſo exceedingly plain, both in itſelf, and from what hath been already ſaid---It is however neceſ-

ſary to ſet it clearly before you, in order to lay a foundation, for the improvement of the ſubject.

If the doctrine of Chriſt, and of him crucified, proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of our ſinful, and miſerable condition by nature; then ſurely, it can neither be valued, embraced, nor improved; and indeed, I think hardly underſtood, by thoſe, who know not this their natural ſtate. What Chriſt hath done, and promiſes to do in our behalf, is deſigned as a remedy, for our diſtreſſed condition; and therefore, till the diſtreſs is known, the remedy will be ſet at nought. If a phyſician ſhould offer his care and ſkill, for the recovery of a man, who eſteemed himſelf in perfect health, would he not deride the propoſal, ſo long as he continued in that opinion? If any man ſhould offer a charitable ſupply of clothes and food, to one, who imagined himſelf immenſely rich, and gloried in his riches; would he not look upon it, as the groſſeſt inſult?

Juſt ſo is the Goſpel treated, by all ſuch as ſee not their miſery. What is the ſubſtance of the Goſpel? 'To you O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men. Behold! I preach to you Chriſt crucified, a Saviour, ſuited to your neceſſities, able to ſave, to the uttermoſt, all that come to God through him. He is well fitted to be a mediator, between you, and your offended maker. He hath offered himſelf up, a ſacrifice to the juſtice of God, for your ſins, by the merit of which, you may be ſaved from deſerved and impending

ruin. He offers himself as a guide, to direct your feet in the way of peace---to stand by you in the difficulties and dangers to which you are exposed, and to give you by his communicated strength, a complete victory over all your enemies.'

What reply doth the unconvinced sinner make, to all this? Why he saith, 'I know nothing of this misery you suppose, wherefore then a Saviour? I see no sin, what necessity then, for an atonement? I fear no wrath, therefore will seek for no Intercessor. My eyes are open, therefore I will have no guide. I know of no enemies, and therefore, will not enter into contention with a shadow, or flee, when no man pursueth.'

These my brethren, are either directly, or implicitly, the thoughts of men, in a secure, and unconvinced state; and while they are so, they can see no form, nor comliness in the Saviour, nor any beauty, that they should desire him.

It is otherwise with the broken in spirit. He sees his own vileness, and unworthiness, and therefore cannot lift his eyes to God, but through the atoning blood of Christ. He fears the *avenger of blood*, and therefore flees to the *city of refuge*---The message of the Gospel, is to him, indeed glad tidings of great joy, and he counts it a faithful saying, and *worthy of all acceptation.*

The justice of this representation, you may see, from what our Saviour himself says, of the end of

his coming. *They that be whole, need not a phyſician but they that are ſick: But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not ſacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.*

See alſo the terms of his invitation. *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.*

Appetite, and knowlege of neceſſity, is firſt required, or ſuppoſed, to the beſtowing of Goſpel bleſſings---*Ho! every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters.*

I ſhall only add, that we find by the inſtances recorded in ſcripture, of ſuch as were converted by the preaching of the Goſpel; that their converſion, took its riſe, from conviction of ſin---*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and ſaid unto Peter, and to the reſt of the Apoſtles, men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* See alſo the inſtance of the jailor---*Then he called for a light, and ſprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas: And brought them out, and ſaid ſirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?*

Repentance unto life, and the return of the ſinner to God, proceeds from the ſame cauſe, in every age. Who are the perſons who believingly apply to Chriſt for the pardon of their ſins, but thoſe who ſee they are undone without him? Who are the perſons in whoſe eyes he is moſt precious, and

who maintain the moſt habitual dependance upon him? Are they not thoſe who have been moſt effectually humbled, and ſee their own inſufficiency for any thing that is good?

From all this I conclude, that none can come to Chriſt by faith, but thoſe who ſee themſelves to be *wretched, and miſerable, and blind and naked.*

Let us now make ſome improvement, of what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

1. I would improve what has been ſaid on this ſubject, for diſcovering the danger of many among us, who have never yet been brought to a juſt ſenſe of their character, and ſtate. Even the general belief, that ſuch, often have in the ſcriptures, may ſhew them what they have to fear. I might no doubt firſt of all obſerve, how very guilty and miſerable thoſe are, who are moſt notorious for ſins, of the groſſeſt and moſt ſhameful kind. But my ſubject leads me more directly to conſider, who are in general, *unrenewed*, than to mark the ſeveral degrees of guilt in particular ſinners. From the text therefore, and the illuſtration of it, I am authorized to declare to you, and *I beſeech you to hear it with application*; that all ſuch as were never brought to a real diſcovery, and inward ſenſe, of their miſerable condition by nature, are ſtill in a ſtate of wrath, and ſtrangers to the power of Religion, whatever may be their profeſſion, and whatever may be their preſent peace. Oh! how eaſy

is it, to lay aſleep a natural conſcience, and to keep a deceitful corrupt heart, in a ſtate of eaſe and ſecurity? Some formality in outward duty, ſome moderation in ſin, ſo to ſpeak, the natural decay, and weakneſs of human paſſions, or youthful luſts, in a character, formed by human prudence, and regulated by health, credit or gain, is often made to ſupply the place, of a heart renewed by the ſpirit and grace of God. But conſider, I beſeech you, that though ſome may be ten fold more the children of the Devil than others, yet all by nature, are the ſervants of ſin; and *except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.*---It is not only ſuch as are profane, or unclean; ſuch as riot in brutiſh ſenſibility; ſuch as are the plagues of human ſociety; who live in brawls and contention; but all, in whom an eſſential change, has never been wrought, that are thus *concluded* under condemnation.

It is uſual for men to take encouragement, from ſeeing others worſe than themſelves; and to conſider all the threatnings in ſcripture, as levelled againſt the chief and capital offenders; but my text is chiefly directed to ſuch, as ſay they are *rich, and increaſed with goods.* Can you ſay then my brethren, that you have been brought under genuine convictions of ſin? Have you been obliged to fall down proſtrate before God, when ſitting upon the throne of his holineſs. Have you found the ſentence of death in yourſelves, and diſcovered no remedy, but in Chriſt? If this has never

been our caſe, you have reaſon to fear, that you are yet *in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity.*

But I muſt tell you alſo that this is matter of feeling, more than of profeſſion. It is not enough to ſpeak honorably of Chriſt, or of his works. Many do ſo, who never felt their neceſſity, or ſeriouſly and in good earneſt, applied to him. It were a happy thing, if all among our hearers, who call for evangelical preaching, who quarrel with us when they think we do not preach the Saviour's croſs---the loſt ſtate of man, and the doctrine of free grace, were experimentally acquainted with theſe truths. Many ſuch, have only been accuſtomed to hear the Redeemer ſpoken of with reverence. They may be able to imitate the language of ſome of his ſervants, though they know very little of that brokenneſs of ſpirit, which accompanies true repentance.

But leſt this ſhould be in any meaſure miſtaken, I muſt make theſe two obſervations—The *firſt* is, that a lively ſenſe, and deep conviction of ſin, is, properly ſpeaking, but a negative mark of true Religion; giving us to know, that the unhumbled are yet impenitent---For it is certain, that many have been under very ſtrong convictions, nay, have been driven to the very borders of deſpair with terror, who yet never were effectually changed, but ſtifled their convictions, and returned to their former ſecurity of heart, and careleſſneſs of life.

Secondly, there may be ſome on the other hand, who are truly *born of God*, in whom, the terrors of conviction have not been very remarkable. This happens moſt frequently in the caſe of thoſe, who are called in their infancy, or earlier years, and who have had the advantage of a careful, and pious education. It would be deſtructive of the comforts of God's children to lay down *one method*, in which he always proceeds. He is free and ſovereign, in the manner of his dealing with ſinners; and ſoftens ſome hearts by kindneſs, as well as others by correction. So that if the end be brought about, we need be leſs ſolicitous about the ſteps of his procedure. Yet I think humility of ſpirit, is inſeparable from real Religion; and if it be leſs viſible, in the anguiſh of repentance, it will be ſtill manifeſt in the temper of the penitent.

II. Let me now for the improvement of this ſubject, lay down a few of the beſt and moſt ſolid evidences of genuine conviction of ſin. And,

1. It is a good ſign that conviction is genuine, when there is a clear and deep apprehenſion of the *evil* of ſin, as well as the *danger* of it. When the mind dwells not only on the atrocity of particular crimes, but on the aggravation of all ſin, as ſuch: When the ſinner is truly offended with himſelf, for departing from his maker's ſervice; breaking his holy laws; forgetting or deſpiſing his innumerable mercies: There may be, and there is often an apprehenſion of ſuffering when there is little ſenſe

of the evil of ſin: but the conviction is then genuine, when it makes the ſinner not only remember what he has done, *but confeſs, what he has deſerved.*

2. It is a good evidence, when the ſenſe of the evil of ſin abides and grows, even though the fear of wrath, may in a great meaſure have abated.

It is obſervable, that conviction of ſin, uſually takes its riſe, from ſome groſs, or heinous acts, which firſt alarm the conſcience, and in ſuch a ſituation, the attention of the penitent is fixed on nothing elſe, but the enormities of his life. If this view continues, and produces its effects, he is ſoon brought to ſee, and confeſs, the inherent vanity of his heart; the worldlineſs of his affections; and the unprofitableneſs of his converſation. It is a very common thing, for perſons who ſeem to have ſome ſenſe of the commiſſion of crimes, to have little or no ſenſe at all, of the neglect of duty, and of living daily to themſelves. It was a heavy charge, however, brought by the Prophet againſt Belſhazzar:---*And the God in whoſe hand thy breath is, and whoſe are all thy ways, haſt thou not glorified.* Wherever there is true repentance, though there may be the greateſt peace of mind, there will be alſo a deep, and growing ſenſe, of the evil of ſin, and the obligation of being habitually devoted to God.

3. It is a good evidence, when there is a continued, and growing eſteem of the neceſſity, and value of the mediation of Chriſt---It was to ſave

ſinners that he came. A ſenſe of ſin is neceſſary to our receiving him; and in proportion to its ſtrength, will certainly be our attachment to him. This indeed is the great, and vital principle, of the ſpiritual life---*I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himſelf to die for me.*

4. The beſt and ſureſt mark of real conviction of ſin, is, if it leaves you poſſeſſed of a deep hatred, and abhorrence of it, and a daily ſolicitude to fly from it. Some may counterfeit a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, to their own hearts; may have a real fear of its bitter conſequences; and even a preſumptuous reliance on Chriſt for pardon; and yet may in ſome inſtances, adhere to the practice of it.

Floods of tears from ſuch a perſon, avail nothing: but he, hath certainly, truly ſorrowed for ſin, who in his practice forſakes it:---that is to ſay, he is not willingly ſubject to any known ſin,---but ſays with Elihu, *That which I ſee not teach thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

III. Let me beſeech all ſerious perſons, to improve this ſubject for the trial of their ſtate. Examine, by the principles above laid down, the reality, and the progreſs of Religion in your ſouls. Have you a growing ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and of

your own unworthineſs?—This is at once an evidence, and a mean, of growth in grace. He that thinks leaſt of himſelf, is higheſt in God's account; and the more a believer increaſes in holineſs and real worth, the more he increaſes in humility. As it is an evidence, it is alſo a mean, of further improvement; for he that hath the deepeſt ſenſe of his unworthineſs and weakneſs, will certainly live moſt by faith, in the merit and grace of his Redeemer.

Therefore, Chriſtians, try yourſelves by this important ſign. Whether do you, by religious duties, build yourſelves up on ſelf-righteouſneſs, or do you only learn by them, how far you fall ſhort of what is incumbent on you? What innumerable evils compaſs you about? and therefore, how much you have need of mercy inſtead of reward? Do you look upon the works of righteouſneſs which you have done, as ſomething, by which you *merit* at the hand of God; or do you look upon them, as the *evidence* of his own work in you, and for you, and give him the glory, to whom it is due?

IV. I ſhall now conclude the whole, with a few directions for producing and preſerving this profitable ſenſe, and conviction of ſin. And,

1. Let me beg of every hearer, the ſerious conſideration of himſelf, and his ways. Many have no ſenſe of their ſinfulneſs, becauſe they have no

knowledge of themſelves at all; but go through the world, in uninterrupted thoughtleſſneſs, and unconcern. Is there any thing of greater moment than the ſtate of your minds, and your hope towards God? Inattention, is perhaps a more univerſal cauſe of impiety, than high handed, and obſtinate profanity. Would you but ſeriouſly conſider your ways, and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace, I would count it a hopeful circumſtance; and expect, you would ſpeedily ſee your danger, and God in his mercy would lead you to the cure.

2. Give yourſelves much to reading, and hearing the word of God. The entrance of his word, giveth light.---It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and correction: but it is particularly neceſſary for *conviction*; for by the law is the knowledge of ſin. What wonder, if thoſe who never open a bible, and ſeldom enter into the houſe of God, ſhould be ignorant of their guilt and miſery? The word of God ſhews his right in you, pleads his cauſe, and challenges your apoſtacy. It is exceedingly rare that thoſe who have fairly turned their backs upon God's inſtituted worſhip, are diſturbed in their ſecurity; but are ſuffered to ſleep on, till they ſleep the ſleep of death. But it frequently happens, that thoſe who attend ordinances, even from no higher principle than curioſity, cuſtom, or form, find that the word of God is *a fire and hammar*, that breaketh the rock in pieces:

that it is quick and powerful, ſharper than any two edged ſword, piercing, even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and joints and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart.

3. In the laſt place. Let me beſeech you, often to ſeat yourſelves, in the immediate preſence of God, or rather, frequently to recollect, that you can no where go from his ſpirit, or fly from his preſence. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God, that diſcerns, and diſcloſes the works of darkneſs. We may often excuſe, or palliate our conduct to men, and even hide its deformity from our own view, when we could not juſtify it to ourſelves, if we reflected, that *it is open and manifeſt, in the ſight of God.*---If therefore there is any thing in your practice, which you are inclined to palliate, and apt to excuſe---ſuppoſe, you were ſtanding at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, where all of us ſhall ſhortly be; and think, whether your excuſes will then ſtand the teſt of his impartial ſearch.

If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. It is therefore the duty, and intereſt of every ſinner, to take ſhame and confuſion of face to himſelf, and apply to the *blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things, than the blood of Abel.*

SERMON IV.

THE SALVATION OF SINNERS, *only* BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

BY

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1 COR. V. 7.

For even Chriſt our paſſover is ſacrificed for us.

THERE is in this paſſage a direct alluſion to the Jewiſh feaſt, or ſacrament, called the paſſover; and to the method of obſerving it, enjoined by God at its original inſtitution. The inſtitution itſelf, with the occaſion and manner of obſerving it, are particularly recorded in Exodus. The whole œconomy of providence towards the Jewiſh nation, eſpecially, from the time they firſt came into Egypt, until their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, is typical. Their Egyptian bondage was perhaps intended by God, to ſhadow forth the natural ſtate of man, with reſpect to ſpiritual things; and their miraculous deliverance by the hand of Moſes, clearly pointed, to the re-

covery of fallen ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt. There is no conduct of Providence, wherein the wiſdom of God ſhines with more glory and evidence, than in the exactneſs, in which the ſpirit of the New Teſtament, anſwers to the letter of the Old; the ſhadows to the ſubſtance; the figures to the things prefigured; and the types to the antitypes. He, who will humbly, and carefully compare them, will not fail of obtaining great conviction, and information, with regard to the divinity of the ſcriptures; and entire ſatisfaction, with reſpect to moſt of thoſe points, about which, the Chriſtian world are ſo much divided. The Old and New Teſtaments do mutually illuſtrate each other. The Old would not be equally clear, without the New: the New, in many parts, would be dark and unintelligible, without the Old. Our text is an inſtance of the truth of this remark.

What ſhould we be able to make of this New Teſtament doctrine, *that Chriſt is our paſſover*, were it not for the light and aſſiſtance we have from the Old Teſtament?---But from both, we eaſily learn, that the paſſover was a type of Jeſus Chriſt: it was intended by God to be of this nature and uſe. The paſchal lamb had a direct reference to Jeſus, as the Lamb of God. It was obſerved by true believers under the Old Teſtament in this view: their faith beheld Chriſt in the inſtitution. The Epiſtle to the Hebrews tells us, that *by faith Moſes kept the paſſover, and the ſprinkling of blood.*

The moſt eaſy method, therefore, of explaining the truth contained in the text, will be, by contraſting the type, and the antitype. We ſhall beſt underſtand what we are taught, when Chriſt is called *our paſſover*, by attending to the original inſtitution of this ordinance among the Jews; and pointing out the reſemblance it bears, to *Jeſus Chriſt the Mediator.* This I ſhall endeavor to do, in the following particulars.

I. The paſſover was appointed, when God was about to deſtroy all the firſt-born in the land of Egypt. They were all doomed to deſtruction by the divine decree, without exception. Moſes declares to Pharaoh: *Thus ſaith the Lord, about midnight, I will go out into the midſt of Egypt, and all the firſt-born in the land of Egypt ſhall die, from the firſt-born of Pharaoh that ſitteth on the throne, even to the firſt-born of the maid ſervant, that is behind the mill, and all firſt-born of beaſts.*

On this awful occaſion was the paſſover inſtituted by God, and appointed to the Iſraelites.

In like manner, Jeſus Chriſt was appointed, when all the human race were by the ſentence of the divine law, doomed to everlaſting deſtruction, *from the preſence of the Lord, and glory of his power.* Eternal death was fixed, as the demerit, and puniſhment of man's violating that law, under which God had placed him. *In the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die.*

The head of the human race, with whom God tranſacted for himſelf and all his poſterity, violated the conſtitution eſtabliſhed with him, and ruined himſelf; and the whole race, was ruined in, and with him. They all ſinned, and became guilty in their head and repreſentative. *By one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.*

On this occaſion, the whole race of mankind, through all their generations, were doomed by the ſentence of God's righteous law, to *everlaſting perdition.* The ſentence was righteous: the doom was juſt; and it would have been infinitely fit in God, to have executed the ſame. If this had been done, each of us who are here preſent, would have been now in chains of eternal darkneſs and deſpair. That this would be the event of man's apoſtacy, was no doubt expected by all the elect Angels. They had ſeen the iſſue of rebellion in the caſe of their fallen companions; and if they could argue only from fact, no other concluſion could be made by them, than *the damnation of mankind.*

In this loſt and ruined condition of mankind, when they were all under the curſe, and expoſed to everlaſting deſtruction, Jeſus Chriſt, became in the appointment of God, *our paſſover.* God conſtituted Adam our firſt covenant head; and he conſtituted Chriſt, our ſecond covenant head. Adam's headſhip was an image or type of Chriſt's. In re-

gard to this appointment, Chriſt is called *the Lamb ſlain, from the foundation of the world.*

II. The paſſover was originally appointed, as the *only* method, for the Iſraelites' eſcaping the deſtruction, God intended to execute on the Egyptians. The account of the inſtitution renders the obſervation evident: for when God had ordained the ſolemnity, and the manner of obſerving it, he gives the following reaſon of the ordinance.---*For I will paſs through the land of Egypt this night, and will ſmite all the firſt-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beaſt: and againſt all the Gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood ſhall be to you a token on the houſes where you are, and when I ſee the blood, I will paſs over you, and the plague ſhall not be on you to deſtroy you, when I ſmite the land of Egypt.*

This deſtruction of the Egyptians was figurative: the method appointed to the Iſraelites for eſcaping this deſtruction, was alſo figurative. The former, reſpected the effect of God's wrath for ſin, in the eternal damnation of ſinners; the latter, the only way of deliverance from this miſery. Accordingly Jeſus Chriſt is our paſſover, as by him *only*, can we eſcape the wrath and curſe of God, due to us for ſin---He is ordained of God for this purpoſe. He is the wiſdom and power of God to ſalvation, to every one that believeth. There is no name but Chriſt's, by which ſinners can be ſav-

ed. There is no poſſibility of eſcaping the wrath of God, but by him. In vain, is ſalvation hoped, or ſought for in other ways; from the hills and from the mountains, from this, or from that courſe; for Jeſus Chriſt is the *true and only paſſover*. Vain are the attempts of guilty, affrighted mortals, to avert the impending vengeance. All the various inventions and practices of a mind, diſtracted with the guilt of ſin and dread of hell, are but as ſtubble before the devouring flame. And he who has never felt this truth, has never yet *fled to the only ark of ſafety*, from divine vengeance. *The wrath of God abideth on him*; and *his jealouſy will ſmoke againſt that man*. And unleſs the eyes of ſuch a ſinner be ſoon opened, to ſee himſelf, and God, and Chriſt, in a manner that he never has; in a manner, that ſhall *ſhake down all his preſent hopes and conſidences to the foundation*, the ſtorms of God's unquenchable fury will quickly do it. *The hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters overflow the hiding place*. Hear this, ye that forget God: hear this, ye that compaſs yourſelves about with *ſparks of your own kindling*: ye ſhall have this at God's hands; *ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow!* Let no ſinner *bleſs himſelf in his heart* when he heareth the words of this curſe: *ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart*. Let no ſinner behave himſelf proudly. God hath ſaid it, and he will perform. Were it the threatning of a Man, or Angel, you might defy his minaces: but the Lion of the tribe of Judah *hath roar-*

ed, who will not fear?---The Lord God hath ſpoken: who can but prophecy?

III. The Iſraeltics were as liable to the threatened deſtruction, as the Egyptians, as to any thing in themſelves, or belonging to them, which diſtinguiſhed them, as a ground of pre-eminence, or reaſon of exemption from the common ruin. This remark is obvious, from the account of the paſchal inſtitution. The nature of the paſſover ſuppoſeth the truth of this obſervation; that there was nothing in the Jew, *conſidered in himſelf*, to diſtinguiſh him from the Egyptian. The one was no more worthy of favor than the other. The Iſraelites conſidered in themſelves, as much merited deſtruction, as the Egyptians. There was nothing marked out the one for favor, more than the other: but the ſovereign God made the difference, and appointed the ſign of diſtinction. Thus it is in the caſe of every ſinner ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt. He ſees nothing in himſelf, from firſt to laſt, to diſtinguiſh, or recommend him to the favor of God, above the vileſt monſter that walks the earth. This is the ſincere and undiſſembled language of his heart through the whole courſe of his life, after he has become acquainted with the truth. '*Why me Lord?*---Why was I taken and another left? Why was I diſtinguiſhed from the moſt tormented wretch that is now in hell? Why was God's grace beſtowed on me? Why have I a part in Chriſt granted me, while ſo many others, who I am ſure,

are not worſe in themſelves than I am, if ſo bad, are ſuffered to periſh in rejecting him?' He can find no manner of reaſon for this diſtinction, but, *Even ſo Father for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.---Where is boaſting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.*

Did not the ſovereign God make the difference between the firſt-born of Iſrael, and the firſt-born of Pharaoh? Was not ſovereign mercy, greatly diſplayed, in ſaving the one, while the other was ſlain; when both in themſelves were equally liable to deſtruction? So, ſovereign grace through Jeſus Chriſt, ſhines with infinite luſtre, in ſaving ſome ſinners from eternal miſery; while others are left to periſh in their iniquities; who by nature were not worſe than they. And thus the ſaint, from his converſion, to the day of his death, has continual conviction, that the whole of his ſalvation, is owing to the *moſt free favor, and unmerited grace.*

IV. The killing of the paſchal lamb, was not ſufficient to ſave them from the ſtroke of the deſtroying Angel, unleſs the poſts and lintles of the doors were ſprinkled with its blood. This was of eſſential conſequence. This was the great thing to be done, after killing the lamb, in order to have any benefit from the inſtitution. The whole tranſaction was uſeleſs, in neglect of this circumſtance. If the blood was not thus ſprinkled, they were equally expoſed to ruin, as if no part of the

inſtitution had been complied with. Though they had killed the paſſover, had eaten of it, and obſerved the inſtituted feaſt, yet all would be of no avail to ſave them from the deſtroyer, *if the blood was not ſprinkled on the doors.* Thus it is with reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt, the true paſſover. He has been ſlain, as the Lamb of God, *who taketh away the ſins of the world*---His blood has been ſhed. He poured out his ſoul unto death. He offered himſelf a ſacrifice, an offering of ſweet ſmelling ſavor unto God, and, by his own blood, hath entered into the holieſt of all. But this will be of no avail to us *if we are not ſprinkled with it.* Without this, the death of Chriſt will have no ſalutary effect with regard to us. The caſe will be eventually the ſame to us as if Chriſt had never died. Chriſt will profit us nothing. His death will not ſave *us* from death.

Let it therefore be ſolemnly attended to, that the ſhedding of Chriſt's blood will be of no avail to your ſalvation, unleſs you be ſprinkled with it. This is the true blood of ſprinkling, that can divert the ſtroke of juſtice; that can purge the conſcience from dead works, and from the guilt of ſin, *when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through.* The ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus is the only defence againſt the wrath of God. Happy the ſoul who, when God ſhall riſe to judgment, will be found ſprinkled with this blood, which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel. But *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh* to every one,

that is then found unſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus.

How it ſtands with you, my hearers, in regard to this matter, becomes you earneſtly to enquire. It is of more importance to you, than all the other affairs of life beſides. And yet, perhaps, there is not a few in this aſſembly, who never made it any part of your care, in all your lives, and to this moment are entirely careleſs about it. Alas! what hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not flee from the wrath to come? What will you do, when God ſhall whet his glittering ſword, and his hand ſhall take hold on vengeance? If you are never ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, the juſtice of God will avenge itſelf in *your* blood.

V. It was not the act of the Iſraelites, in ſprinkling the blood of the lamb on the poſts, and lintles of their doors, that God had reſpect to, when he paſſed them over, while he deſtroyed the Egyptians. It was not, I ſay, their act or obedience that God looked at, and on account of which he ſpared them: but it was the *blood itſelf*, to which he had reſpect, and on account of which he paſſed them by.—The blood ſeen on the poſts of their doors, was the thing which ſecured them from deſtruction, and to which God had an *excluſive reſpect*, when he went through the land, deſtroying all the firſt-born of the Egyptians, and paſſing over the Iſraelites.

Thus is the matter repreſented in the above cited chapter. *And the blood ſhall be to you for a token upon the houſes where you are, and when I ſee the blood, I will paſs over you, and the plague ſhall not be upon you to deſtroy you, when I ſmite the land of Egypt.* And again---*When the Lord ſeeth the blood on the lintle and on the two ſide poſts, the Lord will paſs over the door, and will not ſuffer the deſtroyer to come in to ſmite you.*—Hence you ſee, the blood is the only thing, to which God had reſpect in ſparing them from deſtruction.

Thus exactly ſtands the caſe, with reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt the true paſſover. This blood of the paſchal lamb repreſented the blood of Chriſt, and the ſprinkling thereof prefigured the ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus. What God had reſpect to in the figure, when he paſſed by the Iſraelites, to that he has reſpect in the ſubſtance, when he paſſeth by guilty ſinners, and ſaves them from deſerved deſtruction forever. Theſe things teach us directly, what God has reſpect to when he pardons penitent ſinners, and beſtows ſalvation upon them. It is not to any thing in them he has regard, as the reaſon of his acquitting them from condemnation. It is not for their obedience, their faith, or any thing in them whatever, but *entirely*, and *excluſively*, for the ſake of the blood of Chriſt. It is this alone God has reſpect to, in juſtifying thoſe that believe. The caſe is here as it was with the Iſraelites: it was the blood of the lamb ſprinkled on the doors

of the latter, to which God ſolely had reſpect and ſpared them: it is to the blood of Chriſt, God entirely has reſpect, in the juſtification of the former.

This likewiſe teaches us to what *we* are to have reſpect, as the only ground of our acceptance with God: for we muſt have regard to the ſame thing in *expecting juſtification*, which God has in granting it. We muſt have reſpect to Chriſt's merit and righteouſneſs *excluſively*; not to *our* obedience, *our* faith, repentance, or any thing elſe as the pleadable matter of our acceptance, or the reaſon and ground of our pardon.

I am particular here, my brethren, becauſe I know *your life is in it*. If you miſtake the ground of acceptance with God, you are ruined. If you place your obedience, or any acts or works of your own, in the room of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, you muſt periſh. *Thoſe, who go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, ſubmit not to the righteouſneſs of God*; and thoſe, who ſubmit not to the righteouſneſs of God in the Goſpel, *muſt periſh forever*. It is to the righteouſneſs of the Goſpel God has reſpect, in juſtifying believing ſinners; and it is to this, *you* have reſpect entirely, if you are true believers: for it is the nature of evangelical faith, to look to Chriſt's righteouſneſs *only*.

A perſuaſion that this is the only thing that can recommend a ſinner to God, accounting all things elſe but droſs and dung with regard to this mat-

ter, are inſeparable concomitants of true faith; or, I may ſay, belong to the very nature of it.

VI. All were ſaved from deſtruction, on whoſe doors the blood of the lamb was ſprinkled, while the plague ſwept off the Egyptians all around them.

While the firſt-born of the Egyptians were ſlain by thouſands, the Iſraelites were ſafe, and no harm happened to them—the wrath of God, *the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs* came not nigh them.

Thus, ſhall all thoſe be ſaved from deſtruction, who are ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus the true paſſover. There is now no wrath abiding on them, nor any vengeance in reſerve. When God ſeeth this blood on them, he will paſs over them. He will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon. This blood will never looſe its efficacy, nor power with God. It is of a *ſweet ſmelling ſavor* to him. This is the apoſtolic language to expreſs its acceptableneſs to God. Great is the delight which the Lord God Almighty takes in receiving thoſe to favor, who are ſprinkled with this blood.

I muſt not enter further into this ſubject at preſent. Many ſtriking inſtances of reſemblance between the typical and true paſſover yet remain: but leſt I ſhould be tedious, I muſt omit them at this time, and conclude with ſome improvement.

I. How illuſtrious the wiſdom, and how diſtinguiſhing the grace and love of God in our ſalvati-

on! Behold what infinite love, *that God ſhould ſo love the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him might not periſh, but have everlaſting life:* that God ſhould ſend his own Son into the world, that we might not periſh who believe on him: that God's eternal Son ſhould be made a ſervant, that we might be made the ſons of God: that he ſhould be made ſin that we might be made righteous: that he ſhould die, that we might live; that he ſhould ſuffer the curſe of the law and the puniſhment of ſin, that we might be delivered from the curſe, and redeemed from puniſhment: that his blood ſhould be ſhed, that by the ſprinkling of it, we might be delivered from eternal deſtruction: that he ſhould be our paſſover, and that the vengeance ſhould light on him, that was due to us, are indeed myſteries of grace, and arguments of love, which paſs all underſtanding. They ought never to be thought of by us, but with rapture and aſtoniſhment. When we conſider, who it was that condeſcended thus; not an Angel, but the Lord of Angels; not ſome exalted creature lifted up in excellency and dignity far above us; but the Creator, *God over all bleſſed forever.* Who but is loſt in ſweet ſurpriſe, and humble adoration!

This grace of God is ſo inconceivably great, that the ſaints, during their abodes in theſe tabernacles, cannot bear any great view of it. It would diſſolve their frame: it exceeds our utmoſt thoughts.

When we conſider for whom Chriſt ſuffered and died; for creatures, mean, and inſignificant creatures; for rebellious creatures, incapable of ever being profitable to him: in the eternal rejection of whom, his juſtice would have ſhone with a conſpicuous ray, and been admired by all the choirs above.

Well may we break out in the language of aſtoniſhment, overborn with the grace of God, *What manner of love is this!*—well hath God ſaid—*My ways are not like your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts.*

Who is not by ſuch a diſplay convinced, that the Goſpel is not *a cunningly deviſed fable;* but an amazing, and glorious diſplay of the nature and perfections of God? How wonderful, how godlike is the work of redemption! It ſeems to exceed the works of Creation, although theſe ſhew forth the divine power and godhead; even as the light of the ſun, exceeds that of a faint and languid ſtar.

II. As we are here taught, that unleſs we are ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, his death and atonement will finally be of no avail to us: we ought to enquire, my brethren, with all diligence, whether we are ſprinkled with this blood, yea or nay? This is the *only blood* that ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel. If you are not ſprinkled with it, and die thus, better you had never been born. Oh! therefore, look into this matter. As you value your own ſalvation enquire

into it. As you would not be forever rejected of God, ſee to it, that the blood of Chriſt *be upon you*— You have an example before you of the certain conſequence of being without this blood ſprinkled on you, in the deſtruction of the Egyptians. They *are enſamples unto us.* Wherefore, my dear hearers, look into your own hearts and lives to day; and let the ſingle enquiry which you make at your own conſciences, be thus, with each one: 'Am I ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, or not? Have I ever been effectually convinced of my loſt, and undone eſtate by nature, and practice? Have I ever ſeen the exceeding great evil, and deſert of ſin? Has ſin ever been imbittered to my ſoul, ſo that I have been pricked at my heart, and made to cry out, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?*'

Have you, my audience, ever ſeen that it would be juſt in God to caſt you off forever, and have your hearts ſunk, and fainted under the view? Have you felt yourſelves without ſtrength to make atonement for your crimes? and have you been filled with unfeigned ſorrow and grief that you have ſinned againſt God, and broken his law?— And have you with your whole hearts, under theſe views, renounced all your *own righteouſneſs*, as *filthy rags*; and reſted your guilty ſouls, naked, and wretched as they are, upon a *crucified Jeſus?* Do you ſee the value, the infinite value of his blood to make atonement for your ſins? Is Chriſt, his righteouſneſs, and the way of ſalvation through

him, what raviſhes, charms and rejoices your ſouls? And are you depending on him continually, for all needed grace and ſtrength, to enable you to diſcharge the duties which you owe to God, and your neighbor?—Oh! my brethren, *examine yourſelves, try your own ſelves.*

Thoſe of you who have ſcriptural evidences to hope that you are ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, how bleſſed are you! How happy is the condition of true believers! God will certainly paſs over you, when he ariſes to judgment. He has given you full aſſurance of this already in the *figure*, and he will ſoon do it *in reality*. Let not your hearts be troubled, O Chriſtians, the deſtroying Angel ſhall not come nigh you! Believe in God, he abideth faithful, and that you might have the ſtrongeſt conſolation, he hath added his oath to his promiſe. *God willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe, the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong canſolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us.*

Perhaps your own vileneſs and wretchedneſs affright you: you ſee ſo little to diſtinguiſh you as objects of favor; ſo much, to render you objects of wrath; that you cannot think you have any part in the bleſſedneſs here ſpoken of. But remember that what makes you acceptable, is the blood of ſprinkling----Chriſt is made of God unto you

wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption. This is the grace wherein you ſtand, and wherein you are accepted.

But thoſe, who never felt the powerful influence of this method of ſalvation, may object; that this doctrine leads to licentiouſneſs. Nay, my brethren, no doctrine has a ſtronger operation the contrary way. No doctrine has a more powerful effect to purify the heart, to animate to diligence in good works, than ſalvation by free grace; than acceptance before God, *ſolely* by the ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus. The real belief of this doctrine, is the only abiding ſpring of holy obedience---Saith not the Apoſtle? *The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us.*

O Chriſtians! be perſuaded to maintain a powerful ſenſe of goſpel grace; and that it is only by the blood of ſprinkling, you are diſtinguiſhed as objects of divine acceptance. This is the ſureſt road to peace and comfort. And by this blood you ſhall enter into the holieſt of all: the everlaſting doors of glory will be opened to you, and you ſhall be introduced into eternal felicity, by this Jeſus, with whoſe blood you are ſprinkled; ſaying, *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*---But are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who have full convictions of judgment, that you have never been ſprinkled with this *peace-ſpeaking, and life-giving blood?*---Who have never fled to Jeſus for refuge,

from the ſtorms of divine vengeance? Who have not the door-poſts of your hearts ſprinkled? Be aſſured, O Sinners! that the deſtroying Angel will enter into your ſouls and ſmite you, and leave you neither root nor branch. You ſhall be ſwept away by the torrent of divine wrath, if you thus continue, when God ſhall deſcend to judgment. Nothing can ſecure you from the utmoſt deſtruction, if you continue to undervalue ſo great a ſacrifice as the Lamb of God. *Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and done deſpite to the ſpirit of grace?* It is dreadful, O Sinners! to have this ſacrifice ſmoking againſt you, and the blood of Chriſt calling for vengeance, inſtead of mercy, upon your devoted heads. O, be warned to flee from the wrath to come! for when the midnight cry of Egypt ariſes, it will then be too late! Wherefore, *now is the accepted time, now is the day of ſalvation.* Oh Sinners! lay hold on the blood of ſprinkling. Hearken to the invitations of Chriſt Jeſus. *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and whoſoever will, let him come, and partake of the waters of life freely---The ſpirit and the bride ſay, come;* and that we may all come, and be ſprinkled with this ſoul-ſaving blood, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen, and Amen.

SERMON V.

The INFLUNCES *of* GOD, *as a* SUN, *the* GREAT CONSOLATION *of his* PEOPLE.

BY

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PSALMS lxxxiv. 11.

For the Lord God is a Sun.

THESE words ſtand here, as a reaſon of the Pſalmiſt's declaration in the preceding verſe, *that one day ſpent in the houſe of God*, that is, in an attendance on his ordinances, *was better than a thouſand:* that he would rather *hold the loweſt place* in God's houſe, and thus enjoy the privileges of his public worſhip, than dwell in tents of wickedneſs, or enjoy the utmoſt pleaſures of ſin. The reaſon of this preference, is reſolved into this conſideration, that *the Lord God is a Sun.*

This view of the words in their connection, ſerves to ſhew us, wherein conſiſts the true excellency and advantage of the inſtituted ordinances of divine worſhip; and the true reaſon, of the high

eſteem, all good men, without exception, have of them; their great reſpect, and love to them; their care and diligence in attending them: *God is in them, as a Sun.*

As the natural ſun, by his influences, enlightens, and revives every living thing; ſo God, in his ordinances, enlightens, and revives the hearts of his people: ſhining into their minds, and giving them the light of the knowledge of his Glory, in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt—ſhedding abroad his love in their hearts, and granting them *that peace, which paſſeth all underſtanding.*

But if we conſider the words in a more independent view, they teach us, that God is to good men, what the ſun, by its influences, is to the natural world. Who is ignorant of the high importance of the natural ſun? This heavenly luminary forms our day; diſperſes the gloomy horrors of the night, and ſheds fertility, light and joy, through every part of our ſyſtem. Without it, all nature would be one frozen maſs; neither life, nor vegetation, nor fruitfulneſs would appear.

Now, when God is repreſented by the beautiful and ſtriking image of a Sun, with regard to his influences and agency, towards thoſe who walk uprightly, who can help perceiving, how ſupreme, and ſenſible a bleſſing, his exiſtence and communications are, in *their* experience, and eſtimate?

As the natural ſun is the fountain of light; ſheds joy and gladneſs through the animal and vegetable

kingdoms; and cauſes our earth to teem, with all its rich variety of fruits, ſo, the Sun of Righteouſneſs, the true, and eternal God is all this, and more than this, in his communications to his people. He communicates ſpiritual light to their minds—infuſes joy and gladneſs into their hearts, and renders them fruitful, in every branch of goodneſs.

I. God is a Sun, as he communicates *ſpiritual light* to his people.

There may be ſaid to be three kinds of light—*phyſical*—*intellectual*—and *ſpiritual*—or, the light of this *world*,—the light of *reaſon*, and the light of the *Spirit of God*. Each of theſe differs from the other in its nature. There is as real a difference between intellectual, and ſpiritual light, as there is between intellectual, and phyſical, or the light of the ſun. The former agree, in many more reſpects, than the latter; but there is no ſuch agreement, as renders them, of the ſame nature and kind. This difference will farther appear in the ſequel.

The natural condition of the human mind, ſince the fall of Adam, is a ſtate of darkneſs, and blindneſs. When man apoſtatized, he loſt that ſpiritual ſenſe, whereby he was capable of diſcerning ſpiritual objects: the image of God forſook his heart, and ſo, no longer was he captivated with the beauties of holineſs. The ſoul now remains in ſpiritual darkneſs, until the divine image, or ſpiritual ſenſe be reſtored; which is done by the ope-

ration of the Spirit of God in the work of regeneration. This teaches us the great propriety of thoſe ſcripture phraſes, where natural men are repreſented, as *not diſcerning ſpiritual things*; as having their minds *darkened*; being *ignorant, blind and dead.*— Theſe expreſſions can, by no means, be underſtood to mean the want of intellectual light, or the light of reaſon; for were we to underſtand them in this reſpect, they really carry the matter ſo far as to ſignify, that the light of reaſon was not only impaired, but utterly loſt and extinguiſhed: wherefore this cannot be the ſcripture ſenſe. But if we underſtand them as expreſſions of the want of *ſpiritual light* then they are perfectly true and proper: The whole world lieth in darkneſs: *Having the underſtanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts.*

Spiritual light is wholly extinguiſhed by the fall; and hence is there ſo much darkneſs, ignorance and confuſion, even in ſpeculation, with regard to divine things. That the world is full of darkneſs, reſpecting God, his perfections and kingdom, is a matter which cannot be denied: and this darkneſs muſt be occaſioned, either by ſomething in God, or by his concealment of himſelf, or by the loſs of a ſpiritual underſtanding amongſt men.— But this blindneſs doth not ariſe from any thing in God, as if he were darkneſs; *for God is light, and in him there is no darkneſs at all:* nor does it proceed from any concealment of himſelf, ſo that we

cannot behold him by reaſon of it. This was never true in itſelf at any time, however great and palpable the darkneſs of mens minds have been with regard to God; but it is leſs true under the Goſpel diſpenſation than ever; for the true light now ſhineth, and God hath eminently manifeſted himſelf in the character and inſtructions of his Son, whom he hath revealed for this purpoſe; who was *the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon;* and whoſe glory ſo conſpicuouſly ſhone forth to the view of thoſe who were enlightened from above, that they knew him to be *the only begotten of the Father.*

Therefore it remains, that this darkneſs muſt be occaſioned by the loſs of a ſpiritual underſtanding, through the wickedneſs of mens hearts: *For light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil.*

Now, of *all* ſorts of light God is the author.—He formed the ſun to rule the day—he maketh us *wiſer* than the fowls of heaven, and he alone giveth *ſupernatural light*, or a *ſpiritual underſtanding*.—Hence is he ſtiled the *Father of Light*, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

If any admit no other kind of light, with regard to divine things, but that of reaſon, *improved* and *heightened* by external advantages and diligent application, I ſhall not, at preſent, diſpute the ſubject with them. It is not this ſort of light that I

mean, but ſomething of a nature entirely different —a light that is properly ſupernatural, and from God; in a manner, the light which reaſon furniſhes, is not, nor can, with any propriety, be ſaid to be. God manifeſts himſelf to his people in a peculiar manner, by a luſtre, as ſuperior to that of mere natural reaſon, as it is differe nt from it in kind. They have the ſame common knowledge of God as others—the ſame powers of reaſon—the ſame external advantages from his word and works, for acquiring a ſpeculative acquaintance with him, his nature and perfections; but they have a knowledge of him which is not acquired in this way, which is far above the efforts of reaſon, though bleſſed with the beſt aids, and applied with the greateſt diligence. This knowledge is the effect of a ſpiritual illumination of their minds, by God's ſhining into them with the light of his glory. The heart is the ſubject of the divine irradiation; the eyes of the underſtanding are enlightened by the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation. When God thus ſhines into their hearts, the effect is a clear, diſtinct, lively perception of his ſupreme and tranſcendant excellency—of the beauty and amiableneſs of his nature and perfections. God appears exceedingly lovely, and exceedingly glorious; worthy to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all intelligent creatures. The genuine language of their heart now is---*Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul!*---*who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name!*---*love the Lord, all ye his ſaints!*---*laud him all*

ye people!---praiſe ye him, all his Angels!---praiſe ye him, all his hoſts!

Not only does this or that perfection appear agreeable; or this or that branch of his conduct; but every thing in God is lovely; every perfection of his nature, and every branch of his providence ---every thing that belongs to him has a peculiar ſweetneſs, and acceptableneſs in it to the ſoul. Eſpecially the Goſpel appears with peculiar luſtre, as the brighteſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing diſplay of the uncreated lovelineſs of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghoſt.

Some perſons talk of great regard to God, great eſteem of his perfections, and high expectations of future happineſs; while they have but a mean opinion of the Goſpel, and are deſtitute of all ſenſible love and deference to the character of Jeſus Chriſt. But all their religion is a deceit, and their hopes a deluſion: for theſe things cannot be ſeparated:---*He that hath not the Son, hath not the Father—He that rejecteth the Son, rejecteth the Father—He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath ſent him—He who receives not the record of God, maketh him a liar.*

In proportion to our ſenſe of the excellency of God, and his perfections, will be our ſenſe of the excellency of the Goſpel, and its author, and ſo on the contrary.

When God at firſt regenerates a ſoul, and ſhines into the heart, and gives it to behold the light of

the knowledge of his glory, the creature is introduced into a new world---All things appear new. It has new views and perceptions of God and Jeſus Chriſt; ſuch as it never had before; yea, thoſe things, which were known before, appear with a new luſtre and beauty---The ſcripture and its truths appear new: new light and glory appear to ſhine in them---Now the heart has an evidence of their divinity, and a ſenſe that they are not cunningly deviſed fables, far beyond any thing it could obtain from mere ſpeculation---In theſe diſcoveries, the mind is brought to the full aſſurance of underſtanding.

There is no knowledge which we can acquire, that can anticipate this divine illumination, or render it uſeleſs---Some ſay, men may, by their own application, obtain all that knowledge in religion that is neceſſary; and then, all that remains to make them good men, is to practiſe what they know. This is one of the modern refinements, and is as far from being true, as ſome others: for that religious knowledge, which is neceſſary to form the heart and practiſe to real goodneſs, lies not at all in mere ſpeculation; neither will the reſult of our own application, in itſelf conſidered, ever ſanctify the ſoul, or produce a truly virtuous life. That knowledge, which ſanctifies, is of a different original: It comes down from above; it flows from the mercy-ſeat of God.

And as no acquired knowledge can ſupercede the neceſſity of this divine teaching, ſo, when it is

granted, in any conſiderable degree, it is very perceptible. The moſt learned divine becomes immediately ſenſible of the vaſt difference between his *own knowledge* and this *divine inſtruction.* His own notions, however diligently collected and matured, are as nothing, with reſpect to clearneſs and efficacy, compared to one view of the divine glory communicated to the heart, by the ſpirit of God ſhining into it. Now, he ſees divine things in a different view; he beholds them in a very different light: Hence, this knowledge is altogether a different thing, from the teachings of any outward means whatſoever.

In this ſenſe, God is a ſun, and, in this manner, does he communicate ſpiritual light to his people.

II. God infuſes *joy and gladneſs* into their hearts.

As God is the author of ſpiritual light, ſo alſo of ſpiritual joy. Holy light always precedes holy joy, as it is the reaſon and ground of it. That joy and affection which does not riſe from a ſpiritual diſcovery of the excellency of divine things, is falſe and enthuſiaſtic---There is no ſuch thing in true religion, as heat without light; or zeal without knowledge. There is, indeed, much of this ſort of religion in the world, but as it has not the nature of true Religion, it ought not to bear the name.

So, on the other hand, there is no ſuch thing in real religion, as ſpiritual light without heat; or

ſpiritual knowledge without zeal. Theſe can be no more ſeparated than light from the ſun; or heat from fire; or reaſon from an intelligent nature.

God does not give to all his creatures equal degrees of joy and conſolation: but he uſually grants them, in ſome degree; and in thoſe communications, he ſhews a wiſe and holy ſovereignty. And where the leaſt meaſure of this ſpiritual joy is given, it is of ſo exquiſite and heavenly a nature, that the ſoul can never again thirſt *ſupremely* for earthly joys, nor habitually prefer the delights and pleaſures of earth to thoſe of true Religion. This is the diſtinguiſhing nature of ſpiritual joy, of which God is the author, that it forever palls the taſte to all ſenſual and ſinful pleaſures.---This is the water which Chriſt gives, that he, who drinks of it, will never thirſt again.

It is only the true and upright Chriſtian, who knows the refined pleaſures and joys which God pours into their hearts: ſuch as the men of this world underſtand not, neither do ſtrangers intermeddle with them. Theſe are the ſecrets of the Lord, which are imparted only to thoſe who fear him. They are ſacred pledges of mutual friendſhip---foretaſtes or prelibations of thoſe rivers of pleaſure at the right hand of God, which are in reſerve for his people, when they ſhall have finiſhed their preſent pilgrimage. Theſe joys, wherewith true Chriſtians are entertained, are produced by the

holy ſpirit, through means of the word and ordinances.

God's own exiſtence and glorious perfections, *realized to their hearts,* form one *comprehenſive reaſon* of ſweetneſs and ſatisfaction. None but good men know what infinite pleaſure it affords, *that God exiſts.* Oftentimes it fills their ſouls with unſpeakable tranſports, and they inwardly exult in the *bleſſed aſſurance.*

The univerſal dominion and government of God, is another ſource of ſenſible pleaſure to the truly pious. O! how comfortable is the thought, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*---that in the darkeſt ſtate of things, *he ſits at the helm,* and directs the affairs of the church, and of the world!---that his own glory will be advanced!

Sometimes theſe joys ariſe from having their hearts drawn out in ſtrong and ſenſible love to God above all things: in a love, ſtronger than death---O! how tranſporting the pleaſure, to feel an heart full of love to the moſt amiable of Beings!

Sometimes he gives them the kindeſt aſſurance of his favor and regard through Jeſus Chriſt---While they fear their unworthineſs and ſinfulneſs will forever ſeparate him from them, he ſecretly communicates ſome tender teſtimony of his love, and, at once, diſſipates every diſtreſſing ſuſpicion of heart. O! how ſweet is it, to be prevented by the goodneſs of God; and to have a garment of praiſe for a ſpirit of heavineſs!

Oftentimes he cauſes the humble and upright Chriſtian to rejoice in the hopes of glory, and the ſhortneſs of that interval, that bars him from his immediate and everlaſting preſence. God enables the contrite one to anticipate the joys of that bleſſed ſeaſon, when he ſhall be admitted to ſee him, as he is:—when ſin ſhall be no more, and ſorrow have an end—when the imperfection and vanity of his preſent ſtate, ſhall no more obſtruct the vigor of the ſoul, but his ſongs and praiſes to God and the Lamb, be as ardent and ſincere as thoſe of ſaints and ſeraphim around the throne.

Thus, God is a ſun, in communicating *joy and gladneſs* to the hearts of his people.

III. God, by his influences, renders true Chriſtians fruitful in every branch of goodneſs.

It is the influence of the natural ſun, that makes the earth productive of fruits, neceſſary for the life of man and beaſt: In like manner, it is the influence of the ſun of righteouſneſs, that makes Chriſtians fruitful in all good works. Their improvements in piety and virtue, will always be in proportion to the degree and frequency of theſe influences---Without them, there is no progreſs to be made—*Without me*, ſays our Lord, *ye can do nothing*. How much is the truth of this aſſertion, the experience of every true Chriſtian? If Chriſt does not animate him by the ſecret power of his grace, how dead the heart to every ſpiritual exerciſe!---How does grace languiſh, and things di-

vine looſe their ſenſible reliſh, from day to day!--- Juſt as you have ſeen things in early ſpring, in the natural world, when the beams and influences of the ſun are intercepted by thick clouds and froſty winds, the vernal, beautiful appearances fade--- graſs, and herbs and flowers decline and languiſh; till the clouds and cold are diſperſed, and the ſun reſumes its ſplendor, and ſheds abroad its genial warmth, by its unrebated rays: then all nature flouriſhes again. Thus it is in the Chriſtian life. When God lifts up the light of his countenance, every grace begins to ſpring, and the ſoul becomes gay and blooming, as the garden of God. And now, there is much fruit to the glory of their heavenly Father. Praiſe and joy and holy walking employ every hour. But alas! when God hides his face, troubles again return. Sin and the world renew their attacks; and, too often, former victories are diſgraced by new defeats: but when the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhines upon them, grace grows, and every good work abounds.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We here learn, of what high conſideration, the being, government, and communications of God are to good men—There is no ſuppoſition more terrible and diſtreſſing to a pious mind, than this; *that there is no God.* No attempts made by Satan to diſturb the peace and tranquillity of good

men, are ſo inſupportable, as thoſe which conſiſt in bringing into queſtion God's exiſtence and government: Let the foundation be attempted, and there is no reſource nor reſt---On the ſuppoſition that God did not exiſt, it were better not to be. Exiſtence is a bleſſing only on condition of God's Exiſtence, without this, life itſelf would be a curſe.

But O! what pleaſure has the true Chriſtian at times, in the ſingle reflection, that God is—The character of God, as repreſented in his word, is alſo an eſſential conſideration of happineſs, as well as his exiſtence itſelf. If thoſe perfections are retrenched, which he has aſcribed to himſelf in his own revelation, the happineſs of real Chriſtians is ſubverted in its original foundation. For it is in a realizing ſenſe of heart, of the reality and holy excellency of them; that their ſouls are much formed to a ſupreme duty, and reſpect to him and his ways. And they have not only ſweet delight, that God is, but that he is *what* he is. I AM THAT I AM, was the name by which he revealed himſelf to Moſes, for the comfort of Iſrael.

The univerſal and particular providence of God is likewiſe a principle, in which all good men are extremely intereſted. Were it not for this ſupport, there would be no ſpirit left in them. As it creates them the greateſt pain, not to be able by faith, to ſee that God, who is inviſible; ſo, a full aſſurance and feeling ſenſe of his agency and concern in all things, is to them a reviving cordial.

It is a ſolitary condition with a good man, when his ſenſe of theſe things is abated; and though God is on his right hand and on his left, yet he cannot behold him---And indeed, my brethren, it is not an eaſy matter to live in the realizing ſenſe of the being, perfections, and providence of God. *He* knows but little of himſelf, and what it is to have a true faith of theſe things, who thinks not ſo. To aſſent to theſe truths, indeed, is an eaſy matter; and to be free from all heſitation and doubt about them in our judgment: but he groſsly miſtakes, who imagines this is that faith, in theſe things, which belongs to true Chriſtians. There is a divine ſenſe of it, that is more or leſs their aim and conſolation; and the whole compaſs of creature enjoyments, is not able to compenſate the want of this faith.

2. We may be here led to enquire, my hearers, whether the Lord God is our ſun?

Do we perceive God's nature, perfections, and influences, of ſuch high conſequence and importance *to us?* Are theſe the ſources of our trueſt enjoyment, and ſweeteſt conſolation? Is God's exiſtence our life and delight? His perfections, his glory and felicity, our pleaſure and entertainment?---His holy and enlightening influences, the bleſſings for which we pant and languiſh?--- Is God our ſun? Does he form our day? Is it his preſence makes our Heaven? Is it his beauty, his excellency, and glory ſhining in the face of Jeſus

Chriſt, that we admire ?---Are our thoughts taken up with God ?---Is he our light and our joy ?

If we can anſwer underſtandingly in the affirmative to theſe queries, then, *bleſſed are ye of the Moſt High.* Bleſſed is that people whoſe God is the Lord; to whom *the Lord God is a Sun.* He is a Being of univerſal dominion; he is the creator and preſerver of all; he ſits at the helm of government, and his eyes run to and fro through all the earth. He beholds the thoughts and councils of men; and nothing can happen to his people, whereby they are affected, but what ſhall work for their higheſt good. How bleſſed are ye, O Chriſtians ! who have a friend of this character, of ſuch univerſal ſway and influence !—You know his abſolute and incontrolable power. He will do all his pleaſure—he can ſave, when every reſource fails and all things look deſperate. You know that all happineſs is in his gift: *in his preſence is fullneſs of joy;* whom he bleſſeth, *is bleſſed indeed.* Out of his favor there is no ſuch thing as true happineſs. The pleaſures of ſuch are but as crackling thorns under a pot. Happineſs, derived from this world, is like the light of a meteor, which inſtantaneouſly ends in darkneſs. The joys of the wicked ceaſe with their breath: and as theſe ceaſe, *everlaſting ſorrows commence.* But then the happineſs of thoſe who chooſe God for their portion, will eminently begin---to ſuch, a natural death will be but the commencement of everlaſting life

and bliſs---To his people, he delights to ſhew his mercy---he will give grace and glory.

God is more inclined to do good to thoſe who walk uprightly, than the moſt affectionate parent is, to be kind and tender to a favorite child---A woman may forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have cõmpaſſion on the ſon of her womb; but God will never forget thoſe, who put their truſt in him; he will never leave you nor forſake you. O Chriſtians! live in his light---baſk in his rays---and may you enjoy an uncloud-ed ſun, until you be introduced into immortal day. It is but a little while till your ſun ſhall never ſet, or grow dim, but it will ſhine, with encreaſing brightneſs, for ever and ever---O then! walk worthy of your high calling and dignity.

3. Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who are under the power of an abſolute indifference in re-ſpect to all theſe things, who have never had any diſcovery of divine glory---to whom worldly proſ-perity is the moſt important conſideration of feli-city? Abundance of this world's goods can ſatisfy you without God: and do you, my hearers, in this ſituation, look upon yourſelves to be real Chriſ-tians? Can you read your Bible, and not heſitate about your pretenſions to ſo high and refined a character? Can God be your exceeding joy and great reward, and yet never feel your hearts exult in his exiſtence, perfections, and univerſal domi-nion? Can he be your ſun, and you never felt the

warmth of his beams, quickening your hearts into love and devotion? Can he be your *centre*, *reſt*, and *home*; and you never experienced the attractive power of his excellency and glory, drawing your hearts into union with him, and diſpoſing you to long and breathe after a ſtate of greater nearneſs, and more free and delightful intercourſe? Can you live happy without the enlightening beams of God's gracious preſence? Can this world ſatisfy you, and its enjoyments content you? You are often aſking, who will ſhew us any good? but never enquiring, where is God our maker?—Surely you have no reaſon to conſider yourſelves as true Chriſtians, whatever your pretenſions may be.

Wherefore, O Sinners! you, who have hitherto preferred the world, and its flatteries, awake this day to chooſe the Lord for your God---Is it not better for you to have God for your friend, than all the world without him? Can the world comfort you in a dying hour? *Can it befriend you before the bar of God?* Can it relieve you, when doomed by the divine ſentence to eternal miſery?

Wherefore, O Sinners? be perſuaded this day to renounce the ways of vanity and ſin; and take the God of Iſrael for your portion, the Sun of Righteouſneſs for your Saviour, and the Spirit of Grace for your Conſolation.

And may God of his infinite mercy, work this perſuaſion in your hearts, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SECURITY IN SIN.

BY

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MATT. XXIV. 38, 39.

For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark: and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of Man be.

THE diſcourſe, of which theſe words are a part, was addreſſed by our Lord to his diſciples—The expreſs deſign of it was to animate them to a ſteady vigilance and attention to their immortal intereſt—to preſerve them from ſloth and ſtupidity, the *too common effects* which divine patience has upon mankind. This deſign is ſufficiently viſible in the account St. Luke gives us of this diſcourſe; but what is here related by St. Matthew, puts the matter beyond all doubt:—

Watch therefore, for ye know not the hour when your Lord doth come.

Hence, the propriety and force of the words of our text, with regard to the general argument and exhortation of our Lord to vigilance, ſtand thus:

"There can be no ſeaſon whatſoever in which it "is proper or ſafe to grow ſecure, and neglect a "daily preparation for the ſolemn appearance of "Chriſt; either to ſummon us before him by "death, or to pour out trying and terrible judg-"ments upon our land; or to bring on the general "judgment of quick and dead: I ſay, there can be "no ſeaſon in which it can be ſafe to be ſecure and "unprepared; becauſe, there is no ſeaſon in which "he may not come, in one, or other of theſe ways: "and it would be ſhocking and irretrievable, to be "ſurpriſed in an unprepared condition."

(And beſides, Chriſt's coming, both to the general judgment, and to puniſh wicked communities, will certainly be in a time of general ſecurity, as it was in the time of the flood, and deſtruction of Sodom. It is generally in this condition he comes, and ſurpriſes men by death. Therefore, it is greatly to be apprehended, that the ſeaſon of our ſecurity and negligence about his coming, will be the very juncture in which he will come, to our great ſurpriſe, and to the everlaſting ſorrow of many---)we ought then, always, *to watch, and to be ready.*

The words of our text, conſidered independent on their relation to the general argument, preſent us with the following obſervations.

I. We may obſerve the ſtate of the old world, before the flood. They were perfectly ſecure--- *They were eating and drinking, &c.* They were eagerly purſuing their pleaſure, each in his own way, and according to his own taſte. Their attention was univerſally engaged in thoſe affairs, projects and applications, that were calculated only for a preſent *ſenſual happineſs*, (utterly) inapprehenſive both of the wrath of God, that was already enkindled againſt them, and of thoſe fatal effects into which it ſoon burſt out, and mingled them in one common deſtruction. (They had no miſgivings of heart with reſpect to their danger; although the juſtice of God is always awake, and attentive to the growth and prevalence of vice; or if ſome of them had any apprehenſions of evil, they did not ſuffer them to mature into ſerious conſiderations and ſincere repentance. They were ſeduced either by a paſſion to imitate the general practice and opinion; or carried away, by an innate deſire for ſenſual gratifications; or overwhelmed in the cares and buſineſs of life.)

Nor was this inſenſibility owing to want of ſufficient warning. In the ſixth chapter of Geneſis, God tells us with an original regard to mankind in that day, *that his ſpirit ſhould not always ſtrive with man.* This, in the ſtrongeſt man-

ner, implies, that God had remonſtrated againſt their wickedneſs---uſed proper methods to reform them, and had given them ſufficient aſſurance of the fatal iſſue of their impenitence. The Apoſtle Peter informs, that Jeſus Chriſt, by his ſpirit, preached to them their danger, and the neceſſity of repentance. He acquaints us alſo, that Noah was employed to declare to them, in the name of God, the wickedneſs and danger of their practices. They had, likewiſe, the ſtrongeſt confirmation of the truth of Noah's doctrine, for a great while before their eyes, in that long and tedious labor of his building the Ark. (So ſingular a machine muſt needs have ſtruck their attention and awakened their curioſity. The uſe of which, when known, we may well ſuppoſe from their temper, did not fail to be matter of pleaſantry and ridicule among them. How often did they call him an old fooliſh fanatic, and wild enthuſiaſt! How much was he the ſubject of the ſcoffs and ſneers of the gayer ſort; while the graver ones among them, who were admired as oracles by the meaner rabble, pronounced his conduct, the height of frenzy and madneſs. Would not ſome ſay, 'ſee the doating fool, how he toils and labors to build himſelf a machine, by which he may eſcape a deluge, that his diſordered brain ſuggeſts to him is to come.' While others reply, 'Curſe the old enthuſiaſt, I wiſh he was drowned ten thouſand fathom deep; for he does nothing but interrupt buſineſs, and diſtract the world with his reveries and nonſenſe.')

II. We obſerve, that their wickedneſs, inſenſibility and unbelief, continued to the laſt. The repreſentations of the divine diſpleaſure againſt them, were utterly diſregarded—God's threatnings carried no terror to their hearts, and conſequently formed no prevailing argument, or reaſon for reformation. The denunciations of general ruin, without a ſpeedy change of heart and life, were no doubt looked upon *imaginary and romantic*; fitted, only to alarm weak and ſuperſtitous minds, incapable of examining ſuch predictions by the laws of reaſon, and the perfections of God. We may eaſily conclude, that they objected to Noah's prophecies, that they could not be true, becauſe they were repugnant to the divine attributes. It was natural to blind, and unbelieving ſinners to aſſert, that it was inconſiſtent with the mercy and goodneſs of the common parent of the univerſe, to deſtroy ſo many millions of his creatures, and that too, only for indulging thoſe very appetites with which himſelf had formed them. How plauſible would ſuch arguments be? How well adapted to the taſte, and depraved reaſon of licentious and preſumptuous ſinners? How would they triumph in this reaſoning, as a complete confutation of the falſhood and abſurdity of all the divine declarations by his ſervant. "What! might they not ſay—"Is not God's mercy and goodneſs infinite? Do not "all his works proclaim it? Are not his goodneſs "and benevolence as evident as his exiſtence? But "where is his goodneſs, or his mercy, upon the doc-

" trine of this romantic fellow, this upſtart preach-
" er? Is not this ſtrange divinity groſsly unreaſon-
" able? Such things cannot come from God, that
" are plainly contradictory to his known and eſſen-
" tial perfections." Noah, of conſequence, muſt have been deemed an old fanatic; mad with new notions, and zealous to propagate the infection, and make others as mad as himſelf; or an artful knave, who endeavored to dupe mankind to his private purpoſes, under the pretence of a divine commiſſion.

With theſe principles, with this perverſion of reaſon, it was plainly impoſſible, that divine threatnings could have their proper effect upon them; or that any means which were judged proper by infinite wiſdom ſhould prevail. Hence they quickly fell ſacrifices to the falſhood of their ſtrong and plauſible reaſonings. Vain were all attempts to undeceive their minds, and diſcover the uncertainty of their elaborate arguments. But the event convinced them by an awful experiment, of what their reaſon could never reconcile with the perfections of God, or admit as worthy of their attention and credit. Their arguments drawn from the nature and perfections of God, mightily comforted their hardened hearts, and ſupported their blind minds, until the day in which *the fountains of the great deep were broken up*, and then their refuge of lies was ſwept away; and the conviction of the truth of divine revelation was forced in upon their minds, with all the horrors of deſpair—Thus ma-

ny, even at this day, pretendedly argue from the divine perfections againſt divine revelation; and like theſe unhappy antidiluvians, will receive conviction when it is too late, from the deluge of Jehovah's wrath, which they would not believe.

III. We obſerve, that the vengeance of Heaven executed by a general flood, was to them extremely ſudden and ſurprizing.—They had for a long courſe of years, the loudeſt calls to repentance, and the moſt expreſs warnings of univerſal ruin, in caſe of diſobedience. Noah, it is probable, was a preacher of righteouſneſs an hundred years, and endeavored to ſtem the current of general wickedneſs, by the application of divine threatnings, and exhortations to repentance. In this view, therefore, their deſtruction was not at all ſudden, nor unexpected. But they did not believe the truths of God; the divine threatnings were to them as idle dreams.—*They ate, they drank, they married, and were giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came and deſtroyed them all.*—They were ſure in themſelves no ſuch event would happen—they were ſure God was merciful, and in this confidence they bleſſed themſelves, and bid defiance to ſuch ſhocking and barbarous declarations. They could not, in any ſhape, believe them, until the fatal event adminiſtered demonſtration, *with confuſion* to their ſenſes—until they found themſelves overwhelmed, and ſtrangling in the flood, and the ſame ven-

geance purſuing them down to Hell. How awful was the ſecurity and confidence, in which they were ſurpriſed! While all were cheaiful, gay, eaſy, and happy, ſacrificing to pleaſure, indulging their natural, and as they imagined, innocent deſires, looking for no ſuch thing; they lift up their eyes, and behold, the awful torrent from afar, rolling irreſiſtably along! Oh dreadful conſternation! ſhocking change! In a moment, from mirth, muſic, tranquillity and joy, to horror, amazement, and deſpair! Hear how they ſhriek and howl! but God laughs at their calamity! See how they run hither and thither, mingling without diſtinction; in diſtraction, looking for places of refuge and ſecurity! See ſome aſcending to the tops of houſes, and aſpiring domes! Vain expedient! for the impetuous ſurge overturns their ſtrong places, and confounds their hopes! See millions fleeing to the lofty mountains, before the encreaſing flood! But Oh! how fruitleſs is their attempt! Thouſands ſink in the vale—Thouſands are overtaken upon the brows of the ſteep hills, and daſhed to pieces by the laſhing waves, among the craggy rocks—The reſidue are ſwept from the deceitful ſummit, down the long precipice, to deeper ruin! Hark, how they cry for mercy! But alas, it is now too late! Theſe cries might have ſucceeded, had they been made in time; but then they judged them unneceſſary, and that it was too ſoon: as many, even at this day, put off ſeeking God, and crying for mercy, until they are ſurpriſed in death.

IV. We obſerve, that the circumſtances and ſtate of mankind at thoſe ſeaſons in which Jeſus Chriſt will come to puniſh and judge them, will greatly reſemble thoſe at the time of the flood.—They will be times of great ſecurity, of eminent inconſideration and careleſſneſs, with reſpect to the matters of religion and eternity: Seaſons in which both wiſe and fooliſh virgins will be ſleeping; in which profaneneſs and wickedneſs will prevail; the love of pleaſure, and the love of the world, will be remarkably great and general.

1. This is often the caſe when Jeſus Chriſt comes to remove particular ſinners by death.—It frequently happens that careleſs and impenitent ſinners, who have had many warnings of their danger, and made light of them, are taken away when they leaſt expected ſuch an event. Innumerable are the inſtances of this ſort. How often are men checked in the career of their madneſs, folly and ſecurity, with that awful language, *Thou fool! this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee.* Oh! my brethren, a ſtate of ſecurity is a dangerous ſtate! When ſinners cry, *peace, peace,* then ſudden deſtruction cometh; when they imagine themſelves moſt diſtant from death, judgment, and eternity, then thoſe events are neareſt. How tremendous is it, to be arreſted by the grim meſſenger in the midſt of ſcenes of pleaſure, or worldly projects, and not one day more allowed to prepare for another ſtate!

2. This is the caſe when Jeſus Chriſt comes to puniſh and deſtroy guilty and impenitent nations and churches.—Nothing is more certain than that in all paſt ages, ſeaſons of divine judgments on communities, either civil or ſacred, have ever been ſeaſons of great ſecurity, and reigning impiety.—The truth of this obſervation is evident with reſpect to the Jewiſh nation, in all the public judgments God poured out upon them.—And the conduct of Providence towards this nation, ought particularly to be obſerved; for it is deſigned as a ſpecimen of the ordinary methods, in which God will deal with communities that he has diſtinguiſhed with the honorable relation to himſelf, as his church and people.—It is evident God never viſited them with any public remarkable calamity, but ſome remarkable public defection is mentioned as the immediate reaſon and ground of it.—They indeed often diſowned the imputation; they denied their guilt; were inſenſible of any ſuch remarkable degeneracy, for which they ſhould be ſo ſeverely viſited; they refuſed to accept thoſe judgments as the puniſhment of their ſins; and had the common diſeaſe of an unhumbled heart to exculpate themſelves.---But from them we learn, that public judgments on a profeſſing people, are always the ordinary effect, and deſigned puniſhment of public declenſions from their duty, and regard to the covenant and oaths of God they are under. And their not ſeeing themſelves in this light, nor being affected with them is no argument at all that this is not the caſe.

3. This will be the caſe, when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be revealed from Heaven to hold the general judgment.—Awful ſecurity, and awful wickedneſs will then prevail; for ſcarcely will faith be found upon the earth.

There is a day, a dreadful day, fixed by divine decree, when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them, that know not God, and obey not the Goſpel—to call all nations, tongues and languages; all the kindreds of the earth, and every individual that ever exiſted, to his bar;—to lay open the ſecrets of every heart—to diſcloſe the hidden ſprings of action, and determine the real characters of men, and fix their eternal deſtiny! One would imagine, that the certainty of an event of ſuch high conſequence, and everlaſting importance, would have an irreſiſtible effect: that it would intereſt and penetrate every heart, and determine all univerſally to the moſt ſtudious and inceſſant attention to thoſe things, whereby they might be prepared to ſtand in the awful day! And yet we are aſſured, notwithſtanding, that it will be a time of great and general ſecurity. Jeſus Chriſt's coming will be as a thief in the night; when men are in a profound ſleep, altogether inapprehenſive of danger. *As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew*

not until the flood came and took them all away; ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of Man be.

I proceed now to cloſe this diſcourſe with a few reflections.

I. How great is the reſemblance between our preſent ſtate, and that of mankind before the flood! The ſimilitude bears in all reſpects, and that too with peculiar aggravations on our part. It is ſo glaring to every ſerious obſerver, that the very mention of it were ſufficient to bring all to an humble confeſſion, and mournful ſenſe of our danger. But, it is the dreadful unhappineſs of ſinners, the nearer they approach to judgment and ruin, the more blind and inſenſible they grow.—This ariſes from two general cauſes. 1. The proper nature of ſinful courſes, which always blind the mind, and harden the heart. 2. The additional judgment of God, who permits the malignity of the human heart to exert itſelf with leſs control.—He ceaſes to apply thoſe uſual methods of reſtraint—gives them up more to themſelves—leaves them to the government of their own heart's luſts—denies them reſtraining grace—takes his ſpirit from them.

The reſemblance between us and the old world, is evident in the following reſpects.—The univerſal prevalence of deep ſecurity—the great means which God is uſing with us to reclaim us—and the amazing wickedneſs which abounds among all ranks of men notwithſtanding.

I. The reſemblance is evident in the univerſal prevalence of deep ſecurity. Let us look around us, and do we not find in ourſelves and others, ſtupidity and unbelief in its ſtrongeſt likeneſs, to that we ſee drawn for thoſe beyond the flood? Are we acting any otherwiſe than they? Are we doing any thing elſe but *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,* buying, ſelling, planting, building, &c.—though the wrath of God is ready to burſt upon our devoted heads!—Are we doing any thing but increaſing our guilt, which is already gone up to Heaven? Are we not by adding iniquity to iniquity, blowing up the fury of God Almighty to an unquenchable flame? Are we not walking in ſecurity, taking no notice either of his word or providence, as though we were reſolved to make trial of what God will do after all his threatnings? Oh fooliſh people! do you thus provoke the Lord to jealouſy? Are you ſtronger than he? Remember if you thus continue, your feet ſhall ſlide in due time. The things that come upon you make haſte:—And nothing but repentance—nothing but a ſpeedy entrance into the Goſpel Ark—nothing but taking refuge immediately under Emmanuel's wings, can ſecure you an eſcape.

II. The reſemblance between us and the old world is ſtrong, in reſpect to the great means God is uſing with us to reclaim us. Noah was a preacher of righteouſneſs to them, but we have Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles preaching righteouſ-

neſs to us. The exhortations to repentance—the warnings of our danger recorded in the ſcriptures, are very many; and theſe exhortations and warnings are ſo clear and pointed, that he that runs may read them. He muſt be abſolutely ſtupid, and nearly ſunk into a ſtate of Atheiſm, that does not perceive and underſtand thier voice. They proclaim aloud the height and enormity of our wickedneſs, and the diſpleaſure of Heaven againſt us.

How loudly have we been called upon to repent and change our ways! How earneſtly and frequently has the importance and neceſſity hereof been inculcated upon us!—How expreſs have been the warnings we have had, and ſtill have of the danger of our natural courſes of ſin and pleaſure!—How often have the terrors of that wrath, to which we expoſe ourſelves by impenitence, formality and negligence in religion, been painted and exhibited to our view, from the word of God!—How diſtinctly have the glories and divine rewards of the Goſpel been ſet before us, to induce us to prefer the ſervice and work of Jeſus Chriſt, to all the flattering, deluſive, and ſinful enjoyments of this world!—How many events have we met with in the courſe of our lives, to rouſe our attention to the vanity of all things below the ſun!—*We have had line upon line, and precept upon precept*—and notwithſtanding all this, does not an awful and fatal ſecurity prevail among us, as it did among the inhabitants of the antediluvian world?

III. The amazing wickedneſs which abounds among all ranks of men, beſpeaks a too great likeneſs between us and them. It is recorded of them, that *all fleſh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence.* And is not this awfully true with regard to us?—I cannot now purſue this argument in all its parts, or give the black detail of reigning vices, which demonſtrate the imitation to be general and true. Would to God that the matters and evidences, applicable to the ſupport of this repreſentation, were leſs obvious and leſs abundant!—What a growing contempt for divine revelation takes place among us?—What attempts are daily made to weaken its authority and influence?—Vain are all devices to ſupport virtue by ingenious theories, and labored arguments, when the plain and ſimple doctrines of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt are ſet aſide. Oh! how blaſphemous an inſult on the perfections of God, is the attempt to ſubſtitute other methods to promote virtue in the room of the ever bleſſed Goſpel, in the place of this glorious inſtrument of Heaven for the ſupport of Religion! Will not a jealous God take vengeance, and confound the deſigns of all ſuch deiſtical and antediluvian builders!—But leaving this, what ſort of wickedneſs does not abound among us? How is the name, the dreadful name of God profaned? How often are our ears ſtunned with helliſh oaths, and direful imprecations?—How are God's ſabbaths abuſed? How are the ordinances, and ſpecial inſtitutions

of Jesus Christ neglected? What restraint of prayer? What thoughtlessness, respecting all the great realities of eternity, take place? How does beastly drunkenness, and more than beastly uncleanness, in all their horrid forms, defile our land?—And how has love and friendship among mankind ceased? What extortion and injustice—what tricking, defrauding, over reaching, and cheating, almost every where abound?—Alas! how few are of clean hands, how few are of pure hearts!

How are mankind plunged and sunk into iniquity!—How do they add drunkenness to theft, licentiousness to liberty, profaneness to foolish jesting, and to all these, a total neglect of divine admonitions, and yet vainly imagine they shall have peace!—Will not the eternal God cause his jealousy to smoke against such secure and bold transgressors?—Jehovah's wrath is already enkindled, and unless we awake to repentance and reformation, it will surely *burn unto the lowest hell!* It will consume *the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs.*

Let us hearken to the divine voice, and not be found proclaiming defiance to the vengeance of Heaven. Oh! that secure, stupid, and careless sinners would make a stand; lay your ways seriously to heart; consider what is likely to become of you, and what you will do at the awful appearance of the Son of Man!

Go, confeſs your ſins; mourn for your iniquities; break off from your tranſgreſſions; and cry unto the Lord, and it may be that he will reſtrain the fierceneſs of deſerved wrath, and beſtow bleſſings upon you.

Let the wicked man forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Iſrael.—Let there be a general preparation. The Lord is on his way. Behold he comes quickly! Gird up the loins of your minds, and go ye forth to meet him, repenting of your ſins, acquieſcing in the Goſpel plan of reconciliation, obſerving all the commandments and ordinances of God. But if this advice ſeem evil unto you, prepare, O Sinners, for judgment! Prepare to meet an incenſed judge! Our God is a conſuming fire!—*Upon the wicked he ſhall rain ſnares, fire, and brimſtone, and an horrible tempeſt; this ſhall be the portion of your cup.*

Let it be the fervent prayer of all, that God would awaken the ſecure, alarm the ſtupid and inconſiderate, and turn multitudes to righteouſneſs.

SERMON VII.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

BY

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2 PETER iii. 18.

— *But grow in Grace.* —

NOTHING can be more worthy of our attention than the great truths of Religion.— There is no ſcience ſo ſublime in its object, ſo ſure in its principles, or ſo important in its conſequences. Nothing can be conceived more extenſive for ſpeculation, and at the ſame time more immediately influential upon our conduct. Theory and practice are here inſeparably connected, and *the acknowledging of the truths* will always lead to *godlineſs*. A ſuperficial acquaintance with ſome particular doctrines, and a bigotted attachment to favorite tenets may ſoon be obtained, and conſidered by many as an important acquiſition. But the leaſt reflection muſt convince us, that ſuch have reaſon to conclude, *they are not taught of the Lord*, and *know nothing yet as they ought to know*.

There is in Religion a connection, a harmony, a chain ſo firmly united, that it cannot be underſtood, if taken only in detached parcels. Like a beautiful and uſeful machine, when deprived of any eſſential part, the whole is deformed or deſtroyed. In a coherent ſyſtem of doctrine, there can be nothing uſeleſs, nothing repugnant, nothing which ought not to occupy the very place which the divine author, who compoſed the whole, has aſſigned it. What will become of Religion if we embrace any of its doctrines ſeparately? What is the Religion of the Goſpel, if the law can juſtify, or the Redeemer be not honored as the righteouſneſs and ſtrength of his people? What becomes of Religion, if faith be not productive of good works, or an hope is entertained of ſeeing God without the love and practice of holineſs? How mutilated, how changed, how oppoſite to itſelf the whole can be made to appear, when only a part is brought forward to view! and how unſafe and wavering muſt that man remain, who reſts ſatisfied with ſmall attainments, and a partial knowledge of divine truths!

The Apoſtle Paul reproves the Hebrews for their little progreſs in knowledge, and urges them to go on unto perfection. There are ſome truths which may be conſidered as *principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*; ſo plainly revealed, ſo ſimple and evident, that mere babes in underſtanding can receive and digeſt them. But to be always contented with theſe, without aiming at farther pro-

greſs, would be to feed upon milk, when an advanced age renders it proper to take ſtronger meat.

In the verſe, of which our text is a part, the Apoſtle Peter alſo exhorts believers to grow in knowledge. *Grow*, ſays he, *in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* He compriſes all religious knowledge, all that believers ought to be anxious to attain, as far as it relates to ſalvation, in knowing the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and with great propriety, for *in him the fulneſs of the godhead dwells bodily.* The eternal Son is one with the Father, and is very God. *All the riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding*, is found *in the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt.* In him alſo, as mediator, are *hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*; and to him as the glorious centre, all the lines of Religion are directed. To *know him, therefore*, and to experience *the power of his reſurrection*, was the ſum of Paul's deſires, and ought to be the higheſt wiſh of every believer.—In this life, at beſt, we *ſee through a glaſs darkly.* The cleareſt manifeſtations of the Redeemer are but *the hiding of his power*; and the moſt lively views of faith diſcover only a *part of his ways*, and prove how *little a portion* is known of him. How little do his people know of that depth of humiliation to which the Saviour ſtooped; of the greatneſs of his ſufferings; and of the height of that glory to which their Emmanuel is now exalted!—How little have they diſcovered of the myſtery of their

union with Chriſt; and of the value of his righteouſneſs! How ſmall is their acquaintance with the ways of the Lord in his ſanctuary, and his dealings in providence! After the longeſt experience, after the greateſt progreſs, there is ſtill a *breadth and length*, a *depth and height*, which they have not comprehended; there remain riches in the love of Chriſt which paſs their knowledge, and leave an unbounded field for farther inveſtigation. Reſt not therefore ſatisfied with what you have attained, *but grow*, ſays the Apoſtle, *in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

But Peter premiſes as his firſt and principal exhortation, to *grow in grace.* This may be conſidered as compriſing knowledge, and including ſtill more. The laſt part of the verſe can be viewed as explanatory of the firſt, while it directs in what way believers are chiefly to grow in grace, namely, by growing in the knowledge of Chriſt, as we ſhall directly ſee.

Without referring you to the context, which would lead us too far from our ſubject, let it ſuffice to obſerve, that the exhortation now before us, is immediately connected with the warning, the Apoſtle had juſt given, reſpecting the abuſe of ſcripture; which was often *wreſted, by the unlearned and unſtable, to their own deſtruction.* This gave occaſion for the laſt word of advice, and one of the moſt important Peter ever wrote, *but grow in grace.* As if the the Apoſtle had ſaid, whatever others

may do with the ſcripture, however erroneous in their doctrines, or wicked in their lives they may prove; be you, believers, upon your guard. Beware leſt ye be *led away with the error of the wicked.* Although you cannot totally and finally fall from grace, if ever ye have, indeed, been united to Chriſt, yet ye can *fall from your own ſteadfaſtneſs;* you may loſe your comforts, and forfeit your uſefulneſs; you may become involved in darkneſs, and bring a train of afflictions and chaſtiſements upon yourſelves. As an antidote againſt this, as the beſt preſervative againſt backſliding, as the ſum of all the chriſtian duties, *grow in grace.* Whatever progreſs you may have made in Religion, you muſt ſtill proceed. There is no fixed point at which a believer may ſtop. Each portion of life has its peculiar duties. To what degree ſoever you have brought your ſanctification, unleſs you carry it farther, go on and perſevere, you will act contrary to the ſpirit and letter of the Goſpel. You may be nearer the end than others who have not made the ſame progreſs, but you have not yet obtained the prize. You may have performed the duties of youth, but thoſe of manhood and old age remain to be diſcharged. You may have fulfilled the duties of proſperity, but thoſe of adverſity, of ſickneſs, and of dying, are yet to be accompliſhed. To confine yourſelves to a certain circle of duties, comforts and exerciſes; to ſtop at any determined period, to be ſatisfied, with what you have already attained of love, of faith, or holineſs, is ſo contrary to the nature of

true Religion; that whoever finds a reluctance for farther advancement, or feels lukewarm reſpecting a progreſs towards higher perfection, has reaſon to call in queſtion his former attainments, and examine, narrowly, whether the ſpirit of Chriſt dwelleth in him.

Religion, like every other principle in the ſoul of man, is progreſſive. Wherever it is planted it will increaſe. This is one never failing mark of its truth and its divinity. It is not only the command of God, but it is the ſincere deſire of every regenerate ſoul to *grow in grace*. This is the ſubject to which your attention is this evening to be called. To aſſiſt you in forming right ideas reſpecting growth in grace, and excite you to attend thereto, is what, as the Lord ſhall enable me, I now propoſe. In doing this I muſt, firſt, explain the apoſtolic exhortations; and then, ſecondly, direct you to the beſt means for complying with the ſame.

GROW IN GRACE, this is the exhortation of the apoſtle, this the ſolemn charge, expreſſive of a duty univerſally binding upon all believers, and extending to Chriſtians of every deſcription. None ſo young in the ſervice of Chriſt as to be exempted; and none ſo old or advanced in ſtation, character or perfection, as to be raiſed above it. All have need of growth in grace, and the exhortation is addreſſed to all. To enable you to underſtand this, I muſt *firſt* ſhew you wherein growth in grace conſiſts. And *then* what is implied in the exhortation.

To know wherein growth in grace consists, it is necessary previously to ascertain the idea that is here to be affixed to the word GRACE. This, in its usual and highest acceptation, means the love of God; but it means his love considered in a particular view as it is exercised towards sinners, as it has for its object not only the miserable, the helpless and forlorn, but the rebellious, the vile, the unworthy, who have forfeited his favor, and deserve his wrath. Thus, *by grace ye are saved:* that is, not by merit, but by love freely extended to guilty and polluted creatures. And again, *the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men:* that is, the love of God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son, is now by a preached gospel made manifest to Jews and Gentiles, and publicly offered to all, without distinction of nation, age, sex, or character.

But GRACE expresses also, in the language of scripture, the effects of this love, and comprehends all the benefits of the new covenant, as they are freely bestowed and savingly applied to the elect sinner. Thus justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, is grace. *Being justified freely by his grace.* All that is wrought by the blessed influences of the holy spirit in the souls of his people, is grace. Effectual calling, a new heart, sanctification and perseverance; in one word, whatever is necessary to render believers meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, is all grace. Of *his fulness have we all receiv-*

ed, and grace for grace. The foundation is laid in grace, and when the head ſtone is brought forth, the redeemed of the Lord will ſhout, in regard to the whole plan, *grace, grace.*

It is with reſpect to grace in this laſt view, we are to underſtand the apoſtle in the text, when he exhorts believers to GROW IN GRACE. The love of God, on his part, is not ſuſceptible of increaſe. It is perfect and abſolutely unchangeable. *He* loves with an everlaſting love; and whom he loveth, he loveth to the end. But *we* may advance in experiencing the bleſſed effects of redeeming love. We may grow in the graces of the ſpirit, and become more univerſally holy. This is what the apoſtle means, and this is what I now muſt endeavor to explain.—Could I content myſelf in ſumming up the whole in few words, I might ſay —to grow in grace is to improve in holineſs. It is to become more conformable to the image of the Son of God; more eſtabliſhed in the truths of religion; and more genuine, habitual and uniform in all our acts of obedience. But this general view of the ſubject is not ſufficient. To ſhew you in what it conſiſts, I muſt deſcend to particulars. I obſerve, therefore:—

1. To grow in grace, is *to grow in habitual repentance;* to become more humble and contrite; *to know the plague of our own heart;* and loathe and abhor ourſelves on that account more ſincerely before God.—The leading exerciſes of the ſoul in

converſion, reſpected the malignant nature and exceeding greatneſs of our ſins. The holy ſpirit firſt taught us from the word to know our miſery, and mourn over our depraved natures; and he continues, by his bleſſed operations, to lead us into clearer views of the ſpirituality of the divine law, and more accurate diſcoveries of our own vileneſs and unworthineſs. Under ſuch teachings, a greater hatred againſt ſin muſt ariſe, a more conſtant ſorrow for it, and ardent longings to be delivered from *the body of this death.* To grow in grace, is to grow in habitual repentance.

2. To grow in grace, is to grow in *faith. We are bound,* ſays the apoſtle, *to thank God always for you brethren, becauſe that your faith groweth exceedingly.* By adverting to the nature of faith, and what is predicated in the word of God concerning it, you will be able to ſee, in what reſpects, the ſaints may grow in faith, and how eſſential a part this conſtitutes of the ſubject now before us.

Saving faith is not merely the ſimple act of the underſtanding, which receives a report, and aſſents to its truth upon credible evidence; but it is a complex act, compriſing alſo the conſent of the will, and conformable exerciſes of the affections. It is not only a believing there is a Saviour, and even that we need his help; but it is an actual acceptance of him as he is offered in the goſpel; a receiving him for ourſelves in all his glorious offices, as the Lord our righteouſneſs. But what now

are the effects of this faith? What does it produce? How does it work? We anſwer in few words:—By faith the ſoul becomes united to Chriſt. *He that is joined to the Lord is one ſpirit. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* The ſpirit of Chriſt is the bond of this union upon his part, and faith upon the part of believers.—Faith is that grace by which we are juſtified. *Being juſtified by faith.*—"Not that we are "acceptable to God upon account of the worthi-"neſs of our faith, but becauſe only the ſatisfac-"tion and righteouſneſs of Chriſt is our righte-"ouſneſs before God, and we cannot receive and "apply the ſame any other way than by faith on-"ly."—Faith purifies the heart; and *without works it is dead.*—It magnifies the Lord Jeſus: *Unto you who believe he is precious.* It introduces the ſoul to ſolid peace and reſt. *We which have believed do enter into reſt.*—Faith overcomes the world.—Faith leads to a patient waiting for the accompliſhment of the promiſes. *He that believeth, ſhall not make haſte.* It directs to the throne of grace, and enables the ſaints *to draw near with a true heart.*—It is a grace more precious than gold, and the believer muſt expect to have it tried. In a word, faith is the gift of God. It is the *ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.* It is that by which the believer lives. He walks by faith; and it will abide until it has performed its whole work, and is at laſt changed into viſion. *I live,* ſaid Paul, *yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me;*

and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

From this general view, you may anticipate what is meant by growing in faith. It is to become more confirmed in the truth; and, from doubts and fears, to rise into a strong and filial confidence. It is to realize the union which is effected with Christ, and more habitually to derive all needed supplies from him, as our living and covenant head. We grow in faith, when it becomes more active, vigorous and productive of good works. When we are enabled in the spiritual warfare to take *the shield of faith*, and *therewith quench the fiery darts of the wicked.* And when in the darkest seasons and the severest trials, we learn to say, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*— Then we improve, when we are taught more cheerfully to submit to the yoke of Christ; to look unto Jesus; and to esteem it our highest honor and happiness to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him. *Lord*, said the disciples, *increase our faith.* To grow in grace, is to grow in faith.

3. To grow in grace, is to improve in our *love* to God. To love God, *is to set him always before us, as seeing him who is invisible*; to meditate upon his glorious perfections; and feel a fervent outgoing of the heart towards him, as the first, the greatest, and the best of beings, the treasure, the portion

of the ſoul, our Father and our God. We grow in love when we increaſe in our deſires to become holy as he is holy, and prefer his communion and fellowſhip above our chief joys. When having taſted that he is gracious, and experienced his love ſhed abroad upon our hearts, we are pained at his abſence, and anxious to *draw near to him*, and have him *lift up the light of his countenance upon us*. Then we grow in love, when we feel it becoming *ſtrong as death*, and engaging us to live for him, *whoſe we are and whom we ſerve*. When we can loſe the creature, and yet find a ſatisfying portion in God. And when we can truly ſay, not only with reſpect to the earthly ſanctuary, but to his courts in glory: *My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God; when ſhall I come and appear before God! becauſe thy loving kindneſs is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee. Thus will I bleſs thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in thy name. My ſoul ſhall be fed as with marrow and fatneſs; and my mouth ſhall praiſe thee with joyful lips.* To grow in grace is to grow in love to God.

4. To grow in grace is to advance in *zeal* for the glory of God. Innumerable motives preſs upon the mind to engage us to glorify him. *Whether we live we are the Lord's, and whether we die we are the Lord's, whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.* We are *witneſſes for God*; a people formed for himſelf, that we ſhould *ſhew forth his praiſe*. When we underſtand theſe motives better, when we feel their influence more,

and by theſe are urged to dedicate all we are and have to God, and improve our influence upon others around us to do the ſame, then we grow in zeal. We grow in zeal when we become more uniform in our obedience, more ſingle in our views, and more fervently active in ſhewing *forth the praiſes of him who hath called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. The zeal of thine houſe,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. Horror hath taken hold upon me, becauſe of the wicked that forſake thy law. Oh let the wickedneſs of the wicked come to an end! O that the ſalvation of Iſrael were come out of Zion!*

There is indeed frequently in young converts, a zeal without knowledge; a boldneſs of ſpirit, unreſtrained by prudence, and untaught by experience. Like Jehu, they are ready to ſay—*come with me and ſee my zeal for the Lord.* The principle, in part, is right, although it is mixed with unhallowed paſſions, and tainted with pride. But a more extenſive acquaintance with the deceitfulneſs of their own hearts, and maturer attention to the nature and difficulties of the Chriſtian life, is found ſoon to humble their forward ſpirits, and lead them into the paths of ſober and genuine zeal—*It is good to be zealouſly affected always in a good thing;* and the Lord Jeſus *gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* It is proper to ſerve God, not with a luke-warm

ſoul, which *offers the lame and the ſick*, but with our whole heart, with raiſed affections, and with fervency of ſpirit. To grow in grace is to grow in zeal.

5. To grow in grace is to become more *heavenly minded*. The Redeemer has brought life and immortality to light, and opened proſpects to our view, which could only be obtained by a divine revelation. He has raiſed his people, eſpecially under the New Teſtament diſpenſation, to exalted privileges, and made *us to ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus*. To comprehend theſe privileges more clearly; to reliſh them higher; and have our converſation more and more as citizens of Heaven, is to grow in heavenly mindedneſs.—When the temper and views of ſtrangers and pilgrims prevail in us, and we find our affections more placed upon things above; when the work of Heaven is more pleaſant and habitual, our worſhip ſpiritual, and our praiſes affectionate, then we become more heavenly minded. To meditate upon *the heavenly Jeruſalem, the innumerable company of Angels, and the general aſſembly of the church, and firſt-born which are written in Heaven*; to feel an habitual deſire of joining with them:—

As with a Seraph's voice to ſing!
To fly as on a Cherub's wing!
Performing with unwearied hands,
The preſent Saviour's high commands!

to be weaned from this world; willing to ſtay, and yet deſirous to depart and be with Chriſt; this

is to become more heavenly minded, and this is to grow in grace.

6. Finally, to grow in grace, is to be *emptied of of all dependance upon ourſelves, and practically to conſtitute the bleſſed Jeſus our all and in all.* He muſt increaſe, but we muſt decreaſe. We take him for our all when *firſt we believe;* but what that fully implies, we do not, when firſt we believe, yet underſtand. To grow in grace is the unfolding of that myſtery. It is experimentally to know that Chriſt is of God made unto us, *ſanctification.* That in the Lord we have not only righteouſneſs, but in him alſo we have *ſtrength.* It is to experience that when we are weak, then we are ſtrong, and when we grow downward in humility, patience and reſignation, then we moſt effectually grow upwards in holineſs.—In this laſt particular, perhaps more than in any other, the ſaints are enabled to diſcern their growth in grace. They become in their own eyes, more vile, more empty and helpleſs, while the grace of Chriſt proves ſufficient for them, and his *ſtrength is made perfect in their weakneſs.*

Time would fail me to enumerate all the fruits of the ſpirit, or deſcend to all the branches of duty in which a growth in grace is exemplified. Let it ſuffice to cloſe this part of the ſubject, by ſaying in one word, which ſums up the whole, that as far as our wills become conformable to the will of God, ſo far and no farther we grow in grace.—To

this we are exhorted in the text. This diſtinguiſhes the real Chriſtian from the hypocrite, the living ſaint from the dead formaliſt. To this the principle implanted in regeneration will prompt us; and this the Redeemer expreſsly declares to be characteriſtic of his diſciples. *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, ſo ſhall ye be my diſciples.*

Having ſeen what is meant by GROWING IN GRACE, permit me now, in a few ſhort obſervations, to ſhew you what is *implied* in this exhortation. And,

1. It is evident, to grow in grace, implies that a ſoul has *received grace.* The tree muſt be planted before it can grow. The Lord is to be ſought and ſerved *after the due order.* The exhortation indeed extends to all who read the word. It is the duty of all men to grow in grace. But the unconverted muſt obtain grace, they muſt firſt receive the Lord Jeſus as their Saviour, before they can follow him; the principle of holineſs muſt be formed in the heart by regeneration, before it can poſſibly grow.

2. Growing in grace, implies an *actual increaſe.* It is not a mere nominal, but a real; not a fictitious, but a true and ſubſtantial advancement in holineſs. Who ever has grown in grace, is become wiſer and

better than he was before. It is oppoſed to a ſtupid ſatisfaction with paſt attainments, and eſpecially, to all backſliding. It has its own peculiar marks and evidences, by which it may be diſtinguiſhed from all counterfeits, and is eſſentially different from the higheſt accompliſhments which the natural man can poſſibly poſſeſs.

By ſtudy and attention, an extenſive view not only of ſcience in general, but of religion, may be obtained. The doctrines can be known, their connections obſerved, and the arguments by which they are ſupported, properly brought forward. Reaſon and revelation ſupply materials for vaſt erudition, and this, when joined to great gifts, may recommend a man to the world; but after all, that man may fail of the grace of God, and his knowledge only ſerve to puff him up. *Though I ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing. Thou believeſt there is one God, thou doeſt well, the devils alſo believe and tremble.* A mere growth in *knowledge* or *gifts*, is not a growth in grace.

Education, connections and prejudice, may create a violent attachment to ſome particular doctrines and forms of worſhip; and in this it is eaſy to go great lengths; it is very eaſy to cry, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*, without poſ-

ſeſſing the leaſt degree of holineſs or love to the Lord of the Temple—To grow in *bigotry* is not to grow in grace.

From a weakneſs of underſtanding, from paſſions liable to be quickly moved, and from unſettled principles, the human mind is ſuſceptible of ſtrange impreſſions, and is often wrought up to moſt extravagant heights; but a growth in *enthuſiaſm* is no growth in grace.

Our holy Religion is a moſt reaſonable ſervice. Its principles will bear the ſevereſt ſcrutiny, and believers can give a reaſon of the hope that is in them. Nothing therefore that is diſhonorable to God, unworthy of man, or that is not founded upon ſcripture, muſt be conſidered as genuine. *To the law and to the teſtimony; if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them.*

3. The exhortation to grow in grace implies, that *holineſs is progreſſive*; that religion, when it firſt begins in the heart, is not ſo extenſive; not, if I may uſe the expreſſion, ſo complete in all its parts, ſo diſtinguiſhed in all its features, as it afterwards becomes. It is the uſual way of God, in all his works, to riſe from ſmaller beginnings to perfection; and we know it is ſo in religion. By progreſſive ſteps his people are led, and they become gradually more and more prepared to glorify him on earth, and enjoy him in heaven. Hence, believers are compared to babes, to children, to

young men and to fathers. The very words imply very different degrees of knowledge, ſtrength, uſefulneſs and perfection.

4. This exhortation implies a *poſitive duty* incumbent upon all believers, to deſire and ſtrive to grow in grace. It is their duty, becauſe it is the expreſs command of God—becauſe it is promiſed to all his people—and becauſe it has always been the wiſh of the ſaints, their *principal* prayer and conſtant practice. The paſſages in ſcripture which refer to each of theſe are ſo numerous, that to mention them would be almoſt to repeat the bible. As a proof reſpecting the practice of the ſaints, let me only remind you of the apoſtle Paul. 'Do you know,' (to uſe the words of a very celebrated preacher*) 'do you know a greater than Paul? Can you conceive virtue in a more eminent degree? Behold a man fired with zeal, making what he thought the cauſe of God his own cauſe, God's enemies his enemies, the intereſt of God the intereſt of himſelf! Behold a man who turns his attention to truth, and, the moment he diſcovers it, embraces and openly avows it! Behold a man, who not content to be an ordinary Chriſtian, and to ſave himſelf alone, aſpiring at the glory of carrying through the whole world for public advantage, that light which had illuminated himſelf!—Behold a man, preaching, writing!—What am I ſaying? Behold a man, ſuffering, dying, and ſealing with his blood the truths he taught! An ar-

* Saurin Serm. 1. Cor. ix. 26, 27.

dent zealot, a ſincere convert, an accompliſhed miniſter, a bleeding martyr!—Shew me in the modern or primitive Church, a greater character than Paul! Let any man produce a Chriſtian who had more reaſon to be ſatisfied with himſelf, and who had more right to pretend that he had diſcharged all his duties! Yet this very man, this Paul, *forgot thoſe things which were behind!* This very Paul was *preſſing forward!* This is the man who feared he ſhould be *a caſt away!* And you *ſmoaking flax*, you *bruiſed reed*, you who have hardly taken root in the Chriſtian ſoil, you who have hardly a ſpark of love to God, do you think your piety ſufficient? Are you the man to leave off endeavoring to make new advances?'

5. To add no more, this exhortation implies, that as it is our duty to attend to this one thing, ſo we may be aſſured that God has provided proper *means* for our obtaining the ſame. Sanctification, conſidered on the part of God, and as wrought by him in our ſouls, is one of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and inſeparably follows after juſtification. But he deals with us as rational beings, and therefore, ſanctification conſidered on our part, becomes an eſſential duty; and we muſt ſee to it, that we are faithful and diligent in the uſe of thoſe means which God has appointed, and which are wiſely calculated to produce a growth in grace. But what are thoſe means? In what way, and by what method can this great end be beſt attained?

The reply to theſe enquiries was the SECOND thing I promiſed, and which I now intended to make:—But the ſubject is too important to be ſlightly paſſed over, and to do juſtice to it, will require more time than is allotted to our preſent exerciſe. I ſhall therefore reſerve this, with an application to the whole, as the ſubſtance of another diſcourſe. And ſhall now cloſe, with only requeſting you ſeriouſly to reflect upon the duty to which we have been exhorted.—GROW IN GRACE! How great, how ſolemn a charge! Like a voice from Heaven, it addreſſes us with authority divine, and love inexpreſſible! A voice, ſimilar to that which called to the apoſtle in the Apocalypſe, *come up hither!*

Adore, my brethen, the God of grace, and bleſs his holy name for providing a ranſom!—*What the law could not do in that it was weak through the fleſh, God ſending his own ſon in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for ſin condemned ſin in the fleſh, that the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit.* A new and living way is conſecrated for us, and we have *boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of Jeſus.* How ſure the atoning efficacy of his death! How rich the juſtifying merit of his righteouſneſs! For his ſake the holy ſpirit will dwell with men, and powerfully apply what the Redeemer purchaſed. He renews their ſouls, beſtows his graces, and by a progreſſive ſanctification, prepares them *as a bride adorned for her huſband.*

But is this the great work which God has wrought? Is this the work which he has been carrying on in the hearts of his people in every age? And are there thousands now upon earth, who are united to Christ, and, by growing in grace, are preparing to dwell forever with him? Let it alarm your minds, and excite in you most earnest and fervent desires to participate in the same blessing: O that you may obtain grace to surmount every obstacle, and resolve to join the company of the redeemed! O that you may say, and perform what you say, *we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!*

This world is the first stage of our existence.—Here we are preparing for future scenes, where our state will be unalterably fixed, in happiness or wo. Now is the accepted time for us, *behold now is the day of salvation.* Dream not of any probation hereafter. From hell there is no reprieve. The wicked will go away with the irrevocable curse of the Supreme Judge, and remain sealed down into an everlasting, an absolutely everlasting punishment. There scripture leaves them; *and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.* While life then remains, and the means of grace are enjoyed, harden not your hearts and wrong not your own souls. The Son of God has come to you in a preached gospel; see that you reverence him.—*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little:—Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* Amen.

SERMON VIII.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

BY

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2 PETER iii. 18.

— *But grow in Grace.* —

THE ſervice in the Temple, under the Old Teſtament, was fitted to the diſpenſation of the Church before the coming of the Meſſiah. The types and ſacrifices directed the views of believers to the Lamb of God, who was to take away the ſins of the world; and when their faith was in exerciſe, they attended the offerings with raiſed affections, and ſurrounded the altar with ſongs of praiſe. At their three great ſtated feaſts, they repaired to Jeruſalem with great willingneſs, and chearfully ſurmounted the difficulties and diſcouragements which attended them on the way. The Pſalmiſt celebrates this in the 84th Pſalm, and pronounces a bleſſing upon thoſe, *in whoſe hearts are the ways of them.* Who having fixed their happineſs in God as their higheſt end, rejoice

in all the ways which lead to him, and are faithful in uſing the means he has appointed to ſtrengthen their graces, and keep up their commnuion with him. *They go from ſtrength to ſtrength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.* As they travelled towards the temple, their company increaſed by the acceſſion of more from the towns through which they paſſed; and with reſpect to individuals, inſtead of wearying with the fatigues of the journey, they found their ſtrength recruited, the nearer they came to Jeruſalem.—What is ſaid of the Iſraelites in that Pſalm, is fully accompliſhed, in the higheſt ſenſe of the words in all believers, under the New Teſtament diſpenſation. They *go from ſtrength to ſtrength.* They grow in grace, and ſhall at laſt become perfect in glory. The righteous ſhall hold on their way, and they that have clean hands ſhall be *ſtronger and ſtronger.*—They are changed from one degree of glorious grace to another, until at length *every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.* Bleſſed therefore is the man *in whoſe heart are the ways of them.* Who loves, and earneſtly improves the means of grace, becauſe of their connection with the end, and has no care, delight or pleaſure ſo near his heart.—What thoſe means of grace are, we now, my brethren, are particularly to conſider.

In a former diſcourſe upon growth in grace, I propoſed—

I. To explain the exhortation of the Apoſtle. And,

II. To direct you to the best means for complying with it.

The *first* I have finished.—It now remains to attend to the *second*. What are the MEANS appointed of God? In what way, and by what method can we best attain a growth in grace?—I shall first premise a *general* answer, and then descend to *particulars*.

FIRST, I answer in *general*, that we cannot expect to grow in grace without *vigorous exertions*. The progress of Christians is always mentioned in scripture, by terms which imply the most active and resolute efforts. It is called a warfare, a wrestling, a race; and the exercises of believers are described as such, which call up all their attention, and require their utmost exertions. They are to give *all diligence*, to be *strong*, to quit themselves *like men*, to *watch* and to *be sober*; they are to *strive to enter in*, and in a certain sense, are to use violence, *for the violent take it by force*. The obstacles which render such efforts necessary, are not on the part of Religion, in itself considered, *for the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*; but they arise from the remaining depravity in our own hearts; that *law in our members*, which wars against the law of our minds, and too often brings us *into captivity to the law of sin*. We are not therefore to suppose when we are justified by believing in Christ, our whole work is done. Then first we put on *the armour*, and must *fight the good fight of*

faith before we can obtain the crown. If we ſleep, the enemy will ſoon ſow tares; our corrupt natures, before we are aware of the danger, will prevail againſt us, and ſins and luſts which for the time appear dead, will ariſe and put on new ſtrength. It is *the hand of the diligent that maketh rich*, as well in Religion, as in the common affairs of life. To grow in grace we muſt be *active*, we muſt be *vigilant*. *Again*, I anſwer in *general*, that to grow in grace, the believer muſt always remember his total dependance for direction and aſſiſtance in every duty, upon the Lord Jeſus. *Work out*, ſays the Apoſtle, *your own ſalvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleaſure*. Exertions on our part are altogether compatible with the operation of God in and upon us. So far from proving an objection againſt ſalvation through grace; this very union of duty and promiſe, of our efforts and the divine aid, is a ſtrong argument of its truth, and recommends it as worthy of all acceptation. Theſe very exertions prove that of ourſelves we are inſufficient, and that our *life is hid with Chriſt in God*. We are not called to this warfare in our own ſtrength, or ſent out upon our own charge. *My ſon*, ſays Paul to Timothy, *be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus*.—Without remembering this, the Chriſtian will find himſelf, however well furniſhed in other reſpects, like David when girded in the armour of Saul; incumbered with weight, but unfit for the combat. I *cannot go with theſe*,

ſaid the ſtrippling hero to the monarch; and I cannot go with theſe, will be the reply of every believer, whom experience has taught; but *I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only.*

But let me ſpecify particulars, and enumerate ſome of the principal means, which are moſt efficacious, with the divine bleſſing, to promote our growth in grace:

The *firſt* I ſhall name and recommend to you is, a frequent meditation upon the once crucified but now exalted Saviour. This I name firſt, not only becauſe it is a leading motive, but becauſe our Apoſtle has mentioned it in this very verſe before us, as moſt intimately connected with growth in grace.

In the life of the bleſſed Jeſus, we have the brigheſt diſplay of the beauty of holineſs. The law of the Lord was within his heart. Zeal for his Father's glory like a fire conſumed him. *He went about doing good.* What an example! What love to God! What love to man! How holy, harmleſs, undefiled and ſeparate from ſinners! How amiable religion appears in him; and how indelible the impreſſions which a believing meditation upon the life of Chriſt muſt make upon the ſoul! When Moſes returned from converſing with Jehovah in the mount, his face ſhone; and frequent converſe with the holy Saviour will make believers ſhine, and ſhed a luſtre upon all their conduct. Beholding his life will change them into the ſame

image, and compel the world to acknowledge *that they have been with Jeſus.*

But in the death of Chriſt, an equal if not a ſuperior motive, is found to engage us to fervent holineſs. The malignant nature of ſin appears in contraſting it with the law of God; but it is never ſeen in all its odious and accurſed colors ſo clearly as when viewed in a crucified Saviour. God *ſpared not* his only Son, but delivered him up to all the demands of divine juſtice, when he made *his ſoul an offering for ſin.*—Who can remember the agonies of Gethſemane, the horrors, pains, and conflicts of the croſs, and not find an abhorrence of ſin excited in his ſoul? Who, when meditating on the ſufferings of the Redeemer, can refrain from exclaiming; ſhall I cheriſh thoſe luſts which murdered my Saviour!—ſhall I diſhonor God with my iniquities, and renew that guilt which nothing leſs than the precious blood of his Son could expiate! By the croſs of Chriſt *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!*

The whole character of the mediator, his glorious perſon, his important offices, the gracious errand upon which he came, the wonderful methods by which he finiſhed his work, and the faithfulneſs and compaſſion which he now exerciſes while ſeated on his throne, are all calculated, when viewed in faith, and frequently meditated upon, to conſtrain us henceforth not to live unto ourſelves, but unto him who died for us, and roſe again. By this we ſhall grow in grace.

But *another* mean, and one abſolutely neceſſary for growing in grace is, the *word of God*; the frequent reading of it in ſecret, the hearing of it explained in public, and attending faithfully upon the ordinances.—In the holy ſcriptures the ſoundeſt principles of morality are taught, ſtriking examples are exhibited, and the moſt animating ſanctions of rewards and puniſhments are produced. *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.* It is through the truth that God ſanctifies his people. His *word is truth.* But to profit by the word, it is neceſſary to attend to its genuine meaning; to view it not only in detached paſſages, but in its connection, and thus endeavor to underſtand the deſign and ſcope of the holy ſpirit. There are, however, ſome important texts, which are more immediately calculated to direct, to warn and to encourage the ſoul in the practice of holineſs. Theſe ought to be fully digeſted, laid up in the memory, and by frequent meditation rendered familiar. The Emperor Antonius, gave this leſſon to himſelf;—"As "ſurgeons always carry their inſtruments with "them, to be ready for any ſudden emergency; "ſo let what you have learned be prompt, and "ready at hand, to direct you in whatever relates "to things divine or human.*" And Seneca relates this ſentiment of Demetrious the Cynic:—"It is "better to retain a few precepts of wiſdom, and

* Lib. iii. ſect. 13.

"have them familiar, and ready for immediate "use, than to learn many things, and after all, "not be able to produce them when they are "needed.*" If heathen philoſophers could give ſuch leſſons reſpecting their ſyſtems of morality, and if they found ſo much benefit by this method, how much more muſt it be our duty and advantage to draw water from the pure fountain, and have always ſome texts of ſcripture ready and applicable to every duty, temptation or trial. This David experienced; *how ſweet are thy words unto my taſte! yea ſweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get underſtanding; therefore I hate every falſe way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* This the apoſtle recommends—*Let the word of Chriſt dwell in you richly in all wiſdom.* And this our Lord has taught by his example, when he anſwered the tempter—*it is written.*—

The ordinances of the ſanctuary are alſo peculiarly calculated to promote growth in grace. It is by *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, that God enlarges the kingdom of his Son; by this he ſubdues ſinners to his obedience, and by this he reclaims backſliders, builds up his people, and prepares them for glory. The word and ſacraments are the green paſtures into which he leads his flock;—there he meets with them, and makes them *to reſt at noon.* All therefore who deſire to grow in grace, muſt be diligent in reading the ſcriptures, and eſ-

* De beneficiis lib. vii. cap. 1.

teem it their duty and privilege to attend the ordinances; for these are the established means appointed of God, and there he bestows the blessing. A *third* particular I mention as necessary to promote a growth in grace, is a practical acknowledgment of the necessity of the constant *influences of the holy spirit*. He dwells in his people as in his temples; he is given to them as the spirit of adoption, to work in them the temper and confidence of children. He is the comforter to lead them into the truth, and shine upon his own work in their souls. But he is especially the sanctifier, the creator of the new heart, and the promoter of holiness in all his saints. Live then under an habitual sense of your dependance upon his blessed operations. *Quench not the spirit. Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.* But plead daily with the Psalmist —*Cast me not from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. O send out thy light and thy truth, and let them lead me!*

In connection with this, it is proper *next* to name *prayer*, as an efficacious mean for growing in grace. Whatever may be said of the prayer of nature, it is certain from scripture and experience, that grace teaches a sinner to pray from proper principles, and in a right manner. The holy spirit helps the infirmities of his people in this important duty. They are made to love prayer.—They delight in the exercise, because it introduces them to *the fellowship of the Father and his son Jesus*

Chriſt; and becauſe it is an eſtabliſhed rule in the dealings of God with his children, that *the Lord will be enquired of by the houſe of Iſrael, to do for them* whatever he has promiſed. Be much then in this duty. *Faint not; but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known to God.*

What I ſhall mention as a *fifth* mean for obtaining growth in grace is, *ſelf examination.* A partiality for ourſelves, and the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, will prompt us to draw favorable concluſions, and determine we are ſomething, when perhaps we are nothing. What can be better calculated to prevent pride, and teach us our true character, than a frequent and accurate examination of ourſelves? By this we may learn whether we grow or not; whether we increaſe in the knowledge of God our ſaviour, love him more, and ſerve him better, than we formerly did. Heathen moraliſts have been exemplary in this duty. It was an obſervation of Seneca, "that every day "the ſoul ſhould be called to render an account to "itſelf. Sextius," ſays he, "did this. At the "cloſe of every day, before he retired to reſt, he "interrogated his ſoul—which of your luſts have "you conquered this day? What vice have you "reſiſted? In what reſpect are you better than "you were? Can there," ſays the moraliſt, "be a-"ny thing more excellent than thus to conclude "the day? How peaceable, how exalted, how free "one feels, when his ſoul is either commended or

" admoniſhed, and, as a watchman and ſecret cen-
" ſor, is conſcious of its own conduct."*—Shall men under the influence of natural religion ſpeak and act thus? And will not Chriſtians, who are taught by a divine revelation, and ſeek for glory, and honor, and immortality, under the ſure guidance of the Captain of their ſalvation, be equally attentive to their conduct? Shall heathen be watchmen and cenſors, and will not believers examine themſelves? Go, my brethren, and do likewiſe; do more than they did, and daily ſearch into your *principles* as well as conduct, if ever you expect to grow in grace.

I might add many other excellent and approved duties which are immediately connected with growth in grace; but I have already mentioned as much as your attention and patience will bear.—I ſhall therefore only add, by barely naming them, a frequent renewal of your covenant with God in Chriſt;—a chearful bearing of reproof;—and an attentive obſervation of the providence of God.

Theſe, all theſe in their proper time and order, are the means beſt calculated to promote growth in grace. And *if theſe things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If ye do theſe things ye ſhall never fail; for ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

* Seneca, lib. iii. de Ira, cap. 36.

My brethren, you have ſeen wherein growth in grace conſiſts, and what it implies: you have alſo ſeen the means appointed of God, and the neceſſity of improving theſe means for obtaining that invaluable bleſſing. The whole is practical, and many have doubtleſs applied the truths to their own ſouls as I proceeded. Something, however, muſt be added, to direct to the improvement which all ought to make of this important ſubject. From what you have heard then, learn,

Firſt, that true religion is a real and ineſtimable acquiſition. It is not a fiction:—It is not bigotry, ſuperſtition, or a deviſed fable:—It is not the mark of a mean, but of a great mind;—It is wiſdom in the underſtanding, and rectitude in the will and affections. The man who is truly religious, is born again. He is brought out of darkneſs into marvellous light. The principle of holineſs is implanted in his ſoul, and, like the returning prodigal, he comes home to his father. How great a change! What an unſpeakable bleſſing! It is worthy of God to give, and ought to be the higheſt object of our deſires to receive. Without this, it is impoſſible *to enter into the kingdom of God*, or experience the exerciſes and conſolations of his people.—Religion is profitable with reſpect to *the life that now is*, as well as of *that which is to come*. It prompts to a zealous diſcharge of every duty; and, in a moral view, it renders a perſon greatly ſuperior to what he was before his converſion.—Religion forms a better parent or child; a better

magiſtrate or ſubject; a better maſter or ſervant; and a better friend and member of ſociety, than, without it, can poſſibly be formed. It ſuppreſſes the baſer paſſions, ſuggeſts the nobleſt views, and animates the ſoul to *be rich in good works*. No principles ever known among men, are ſo efficacious in promoting holineſs, and none actually abound in good works ſo much as thoſe, who feel the conſtraining influence of the doctrines of grace.

Let the enemies of revelation, let the ſcoffers, therefore, learn to think and ſpeak with reverence of what bears the ſtamp of divinity, and is ſo eſſential even to the good of ſociety. They are enemies to mankind as well as to God, who ridicule ſacred things, and oppoſe the progreſs of the goſpel. You, who are of this claſs, may glory in your growing numbers, and by your ſophiſtry and impudence expect to drive religion from the field; but know, that it is ſupported from on high; it has triumphed over much more formidable antagoniſts, and will live and grow againſt all the oppoſition of the gates of hell. And with reſpect to yourſelves, be aſſured, that however much you may be eſteemed on other accounts, yet as infidels and ſcoffers, you are pitied and deſpiſed by the wiſe and good. And know alſo of a certainty, that if you perſevere and die in the ſame mind you now are, you will be forever ſhut out from the preſence of that God whom you never loved, and from thoſe bleſſings which you never reliſhed, nor

ſought. But ſhould convictions of ſin and guilt ever ariſe in your heart, you will then find that the religion of nature is not ſufficient for your ſalvation. It may teach you ſomething of your miſery, but it is from the goſpel, that very goſpel which you now affect to deſpiſe, you can alone learn what you *muſt do to be ſaved.*

As to you who profeſs the religion of Chriſt, and receive the Bible as the ſtandard of your faith and practice, what concluſion do you draw from the ſubject you have heard? Will mere orthodoxy in doctrines; will regularity in your conduct, or punctuality in worſhip, render you truly religious? Will theſe produce pardon for your ſins, or make you meet for glory? Alas! in all theſe you may abound, and yet have no love to God, or ſincere ſubmiſſion to the Lord Jeſus. To conſtitute vital piety, and make you a real diſciple of the Redeemer, you muſt obtain a new heart, and by faith become united to Chriſt.

Shall I alarm your fears by appealing to the terrors of the law? Shall I arraign your conſciences at the dread tribunal of your Judge? Shall I remind you that you have to do with the *living God*, who is, out of Chriſt, *a conſuming fire?* Shall I repeat, that without holineſs no man can *ſee God?* I will rather at preſent plead with you, and, as a humble ſuppliant, beſeech you to be reconciled to God. What will it avail to have a name to live, if yet you are dead? To toil through duties, and

profeſs religion, without feeling its power, or ſharing in its comforts. What will you be profited, if you gain the whole world, and loſe your own ſouls? Will riches, fame or wiſdom, will pleaſure, or any other acquiſition, ultimately benefit you, if God is not your father, if Jeſus is not your ſaviour, and you have not the ſpirit of Chriſt? This is the one thing needful—Seek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, and all neceſſary bleſſings will be added unto you. O that you may hear the voice of love, which invites the *weary and heavy laden* to come; which repeats the call to all who *will*, and declares that he who cometh, *ſhall in no wiſe be caſt out*. Come in all your guilt and unworthineſs, and reſt not until you have obtained repentance and faith, from the exalted Saviour. Both are his gift, and you lie at his mercy. This is your firſt ſtep; this you muſt experience before you can grow in grace.

Are there any preſent who are bleſſing themſelves with the remembrance of ſome former convictions, and reſt in theſe as ſufficient and complete? Our preſent ſubject brings a meſſage to ſuch. If you are contented with your paſt experiences, if you can ſit down ſatisfied becauſe you have joined with others in worſhip, when perhaps there was a revival of religion, if you are not troubled with your own wicked heart, and have no deſire for improving in holineſs, you have reaſon to be alarmed. The text adminiſters no immediate comfort to you. Inſtead of telling you

to grow in grace, I muſt in faithfulneſs declare to you, that there is reaſon to fear you have never had grace. Your work has not been in truth.—You have reſted ſhort of Chriſt.—You are yet in your ſins.—O periſh not at the threſhold! Let not the character of an almoſt Chriſtian ſatisfy you; but look unto Jeſus.—Attend to the firſt works ſpeedily, that Chriſt may give you life.

But *ſecondly*, we have ſeen that wherever grace is implanted in the ſoul it becomes an active principle, it grows, it is a fountain of living water ſpringing up into everlaſting life. Let all then, who have obtained the unſpeakable happineſs and honor of believing in Chriſt, adopt the language and ſentiment of Paul. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. I count not myſelf to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth to thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* Have you received Chriſt Jeſus as your Lord and Redeemer, then walk in him. Put on the whole armour of God, and learn *to fight the good fight of faith.* Give all diligence to make your calling and election ſure. Lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet you, and *run with patience the race that is ſet before you.* Look unto Jeſus, and ſo run that ye may obtain. So run, *not as uncertainly*, ſo fight, *not as one that beateth the air.*

Strive to preſerve the cleareſt evidences of your juſtification, and conſcientiouſly improve your talents, *for to him that hath ſhall be given.* Remember, that to glorify God by a humble and holy walk; to promote the intereſts of the Redeemer's kingdom; to do good to others, and fulfil all the duties of your reſpective ſtations, are the worthy objects which grace inſpires. In performing theſe you ſhine as lights in the world, you glorify your heavenly Father, and moſt effectually work out your own ſalvation. To theſe you are called, and theſe as you grow in grace, will become more and more habitual, pleaſant and eaſy. Be not ſatisfied, O believer! with your paſt attainments; the half has not been told you of the comforts of religion, of communion with God, and of the manifeſtations of Chriſt to the ſouls of his people. Be not contented with your former exertions in the ſervice of your Lord; the half has not been done of what you ought to do, or what through grace you can perform. Look at ſome of your brethren who have felt the conſtraining power of his love, and ſee what they have done, and ſuffered for their bleſſed maſter. What zeal! What ſelf-denial! What animated worſhip! What fervent love! What laborious efforts to promote the glory of God, and bear a teſtimony againſt the prevailing ſins of their day and generation, have characterized many in the church of Chriſt!—Go believer! go, and endeavour to imitate them. As long as life and breath remain, let all be devoted to the

ſervice of your exalted Saviour. And while gratitude unites with faith and love, you will never judge you have done too much for him, who died for you.—In choice and in affections you have left all for Jeſus, and have openly aſſociated with the people of God: you delight in their company and are not aſhamed of Chriſt.—Perhaps ſome of us preſent have dedicated our whole lives to his immediate ſervice in the goſpel, and given up all the flattering proſpects of wealth and preferment in the world for his ſake. But we have none of us ſuffered perſecution, or yet *reſiſted unto blood.* We have none of us endured what many of his dear children have frequently ſuſtained. "As for us," ſays Juſtin Martyr, ſpeaking of the Chriſtians of his day, "As for us that have entertained the religion of the holy Jeſus, yourſelves know very well, that there is nothing throughout the world that is able to ſubdue or affright us out of our profeſſion, Nothing is more evident than though our heads be expoſed to ſwords and axes, our bodies faſtened to the croſs; though thrown to wild beaſts, and harraſſed out with chains, fire, and all other inſtruments of torment, yet do we not depart from our profeſſion. Nay the more theſe things happen to us, the faſter do others flock over to the name of Jeſus, and become pious and devout followers of Chriſt." "Amongſt us," ſays Cyprian, "there flouriſhes ſtrength of hope, firmneſs of faith, a mind erect amidſt the ruins of a tottering age, an immovable virtue, a patience ſerene and chearful,

and a ſoul always ſecure and certain of its God." Inſtead of producing particular inſtances in which theſe declarations were abundantly verified; let me only repeat the noble anſwer which the celebrated old Polycarp made before the tribunal of the Proconſul. "Theſe fourſcore and ſix years have I ſerved Chriſt, and he never did me any harm, and how then can I blaſpheme my maſter and my Saviour!"—In this manner Chriſtians formerly ſpoke and acted; and while the ſame Saviour, the ſame relation and grace remain, an obligation continues for the ſame ſentiments, and a ſimilar boldneſs and zeal.

Are any of you, while I am ſpeaking, conſcious of having proved falſe to your vows, and ſtand chargeable with backſliding inſtead of growing in grace? Alas, my brethren! you have robbed your ſouls of many comforts; you have brought reproach upon the holy religion you profeſs, and it is an unſpeakable mercy if you have been kept back from *preſumptuous ſins*, and not *given occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme*. But hear with gratitude and aſtoniſhment, ye backſliders! The exhortation to grow in grace is addreſſed alſo to you. The unchangeable Jeſus is waiting to reſtore you. He is Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee. And his language to you this day is, *return ye backſliding children and I will heal your backſlidings*. O let it be the language of your ſouls, we come unto thee compaſſionate Saviour! *We come unto thee for thou art the Lord our God!* To re-

turn is your first step towards growth in grace. *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works.* To yourselves take all the shame and guilt, and let none presume to make God the author of their sin. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* God forbid! *You have not so learned Christ.* You are convinced that *every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed,* and *then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.* Be deeply humbled, and confess your sins to him, who has declared that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Though a sense of guilt may prompt you to say, *I am cast out of thy sight,* yet look, my brethren, *look again to his holy temple.* Look in faith to Jesus, and you will find, *he is the propitiation for our sins.* May the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!*

But there are many of the children of God, whose souls are cast down from a failure of those vigorous exercises which they once had; and who, notwithstanding they cannot charge themselves with any positive backslidings, are yet often crying out, *O that it was with me as in days past! Will the Lord cast off for ever, will he be favorable no more!* Ye tossed as with a tempest, remember that *this is your infirmity!* The exercises of his people are not always of the same kind. Believers pass through various seasons. They are not forever on the

mount rejoicing in the Lord, but often descend into the valley of affliction and trouble. *They sink* sometimes *in deep mire where there is no standing*, and find themselves in a situation which may be compared to a *horrible pit*, and *miry clay*. Be not therefore, my brethren, disheartened. These are the footsteps of the flock. *Who* then is *among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

But darkness and want of former comforts is not the only case must here be attended to. A humbling sense of indwelling sin, of small progress in holiness and continued barrenness often discourage the saints. They see others, who perhaps began in the service of Christ, much later than themselves, advancing far beyond them in knowledge, zeal and love. Upon the strictest examination they appear to themselves, not only defective in growth, but even worse than they were at first. To these, and to similar complaints we answer, the Lord is sovereign in his dispensations. But after all, the judgment you form of yourselves may probably not be just. Is not the depravity which you discover in your own heart; is not a view of your deficiency in love and zeal, over which you mourn, a proof of more light and of enlarged experience? Do not these tend to humble you and render the blessed Jesus, in all his offices, more precious? And is not this a growth in grace? Forget not, O be-

liever! that you muſt decreaſe and Chriſt muſt increaſe; and be perſuaded, that by theſe very methods, of which you complain, he is emptying you of pride and remaining confidence in your own righteouſneſs, and thus making room for his becoming all and in all to your ſouls. It is thus *he leads the blind by a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known.* Fear not. Let faith and patience have their perfect work; and continue to wait upon the Lord and you ſhall renew your ſtrength.

Let thoſe who are young diſciples become animated with the exalted proſpects which the ſervice of the Redeemer opens to their view. Be aſſured that faithfulneſs to God will bring its preſent reward, beſides the glory which remains in reverſion. Remember your relation is now changed, and you are no longer your own. You counted the coſt when you gave yourſelves away to Chriſt, and you are not to look back. Serve the Lord, then, with full purpoſe of heart. Flee youthful luſts, and aſſort with *them, that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* In every trial, in all your temptations look unto Jeſus. Be not diſcouraged, he is faithful, he will eſtabliſh you and keep you from evil. *Little children,* ſays the Apoſtle John, *I write unto you becauſe your ſins are forgiven you for his name's ſake.* And ſurely they, to whom much is forgiven, will love much. Indulge this love and prove it, young Chriſtians, by keeping all his commandments. Grow in grace.

And now, believers, while we excite you all to grow in grace, you cannot fail, in proportion as you underſtand the exhortation, to mourn before God that this is ſo little attended to, in our day. Cheriſh this generous ſorrow, and let it deeply affect your hearts, that ſuch faint traces of holineſs are diſcernable in the viſible church: that ſo many deceive themſelves and diſhonor Chriſt, by profeſſing his religion, while their lives and conduct announce them to be baptized infidels. But let it moſt affect you, that many, even of the children of Zion, appear to have departed from that ſtrictneſs in piety and conſcientious holineſs, which always ought to characterize real believers. Alas, *how is the gold changed, and the fine gold become dim!*

Let all, who love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, often unite in prayer for a revival of religion, and plead fervently for the outpouring of his ſpirit. We have been witneſſes to the wonderful interpoſitions of Providence in the progreſs and iſſue of the late war, and the national bleſſings in which we are now eſtabliſhed. *The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.* We now wait for his ſalvation to Zion; for a day of power in his churches, when he ſhall bear witneſs to his own truths, and numerous converts ſubmit to the Redeemer. Pray much for this. Your fervent interceſſions will be a happy token, that the *time to favor Zion, yea the ſet time is come.* Pray for miniſters and people, that they may ſeek the glory of God and not their own honor; and that all may

unite by holineſs and growth in grace, to recommend the religion of Jeſus.—But whatever cloud may be ſtill impending over Zion, and whatever may be the conſequences of the ſpirit of diſſipation, error and infidelity which has gone forth; be ye, believers, faithful, and your ſouls *will be given you for a prey.* God will preſerve and ſtrengthen you, and *he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt.*

You are under indiſpenſable obligations to forſake all ſin and glorify God, not only as his creatures, but eſpecially as his children who are created anew in Chriſt Jeſus. Often meditate upon theſe obligations, and remember that *ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price*, and *therefore* whatever others may do, *ye are to glorify God in your body and in your ſpirit which are God's.*

Strive to obtain clear apprehenſions of growth in grace, that you may determine with preciſion, wherein it conſiſts. Deſpiſe not the day of ſmall things. It is by little and little the enemy ſhall be driven out before you. Through many fallings and riſings, changes and viciſſitudes, your progreſs lies. By many ſad experiences you will know that your luſts are not yet all deſtroyed; but by many comforting evidences you will aſſuredly find the promiſed aid of the ſpirit, and the power of Chriſt in promoting your growth in grace.—Be afraid of ſin and of temptations, but be not afraid of the croſs. Trials and afflictions

prove no impediment to ſanctification. When ſufferings produce proper exerciſes, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs; they make us ſenſible of our weakneſs; they imbitter ſin, and leſſen that attachment to the world which mars our progreſs and hinders our growth in grace. Be then of *a good courage* and go in the ſtrength of the Lord. Your ſalvation is *nearer than when you believed*, and you may, in humble hope, look forward to your everlaſting home, which is full in view: for yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry. And *now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON IX.

A STANDING REVELATION, *once* ATTESTED, *the beſt* EVIDENCE *of a* FUTURE LIFE.

BY

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LUKE xvi. 31.

——— *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

THESE words conclude the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The former, amidſt an outward fulneſs, is ſuppoſed to have lived regardleſs of future retributions. The latter, in the depths of poverty and diſtreſs, was mindful of the reference, which the preſent life hath to an after one. Wretched as his external circumſtances were, he found refuge in the principles of revealed religion. The change, which death made in the ſtate of theſe oppoſite characters, was great. One received all his good things, the other all his evil things, in this life. When death cloſed the ſcene, the former was tormented, and the latter comfort-

ed. *He*, who experienced the ſad conſequence of irreligion, and aſſured that there was no redemption out of hell, earneſtly ſolicited that a meſſenger might be ſent from the inviſible world, to his kindred on earth. They were as thoughtleſs of futurity as he had been. And he preſumed, that ſuch a meſſenger as he requeſted, warning them of the iſſue of their living in pleaſures, and dwelling careleſsly, might be inſtrumental to ſave them from the torments he felt. To this requeſt he received for anſwer, *They have Moſes and the prophets; let them hear them.* He moſt importunately renewed the requeſt: *Nay,—but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* The final anſwer is in the words of the text: *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

If what is here ſaid of the evidence of religion, from Moſes and the prophets, be juſt, much more may the ſame be ſaid of the evidence which Chriſtianity furniſheth.

Two propoſitions will come under our conſideration.

Firſt, a ſtanding revelation, once properly confirmed, is ſufficient to aſſure men of future retributions, and lead them to repentance.

Secondly, there is no probability that thoſe, who withſtand this evidence, would be perſuaded by the propoſed method, of one coming to them

from the other world,—one, whom they once well knew on earth.

Firſt, a ſtanding revelation, once properly confirmed, is ſufficient to aſſure men of future retributions, and lead them to repentance.

The knowledge of futurity belongs to God. If he hath borne teſtimony to the doctrine of a future life, by ſetting his ſeal to the ſcriptures which declare it, this ſhould ſatisfy us. We receive the teſtimony of men to things which we have not ſeen nor known. Is not the witneſs of God greater?

Bleſſed are they who have not ſeen, and yet have believed. A ſceptic cannot receive this: He believes not the things which he ſees: Demonſtration, and teſtimony, are alike diſregarded. But let us conſider this declaration in the inſtance to which it immediately relates, *the reſurrection of Jeſus.* This, if it really happened, is allowed to be a miracle. It is, however, urged, that a miracle is "a fact of ſuch a nature, as no human teſtimony can ſupport." 'Though we may, and muſt believe, in other caſes, without ſeeing; yet in this we may not.' The enquiry then is, whether a miracle, the reſurrection of Jeſus in particular, may be believed on teſtimony?

To enforce his requeſt for his brethren, the rich man uſeth this argument; *If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* This ſuppoſeth the *poſ-*

ſibility of a revelation, and the *confirmation* of it, by miracle. The ſame is ſuppoſed, in the declaration of the doubting diſciple: *Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe.* To qualify him for the office of an Apoſtle, it was neceſſary that Thomas ſhould ſee Jeſus, after he roſe from the dead. He could not otherwiſe have preached the reſurrection, as a fact, of which he was a witneſs: But the teſtimony of the other Apoſtles was ſufficient for his own conviction. For if they were *competent judges*, whether their maſter was riſen, they were alſo *competent witneſſes* of this fact. We will, *firſt*, enquire whether they were *competent judges*. And if they were, we will ſhew, *ſecondly*, the juſtneſs of our inference, that they were *competent witneſſes*.

Firſt, the Apoſtles were *competent judges*, whether Jeſus roſe from the dead.

A reſurrection, if real, may be as well known, and atteſted, as any fact whatever. The Apoſtles could *ſee*, and *hear*, and *feel*; and theſe were the only requiſites in the preſent caſe. By the laſt *ſenſe*, they could determine, whether Jeſus had fleſh and bones, or were a mere ſpectre. By the ſecond, they could know, whether he uttered articulate words. By the firſt, they could know, whether he was, or was not, the perſon whom they ſaw crucified, a few days before. They could not, therefore, from weakneſs, credulity, or ſurprize, be incapable of judging in a caſe, ſo plain. To ſup-

poſe them incapable, would be to ſay, that common men are incapable of giving teſtimony to any common fact. If they ate, and freely converſed with him, forty days together, what room was there for deception? Suppoſe him riſen, might he not be ſeen, and known to be riſen, with the ſame certainty, as any perſon is ſeen, and known to be living? What is there in the nature of the fact, that a dead man is come to life, which renders it leſs diſcernable by the ſenſes, than this fact; that one, who never died, is alive? If a particular friend or acquaintance, lately deceaſed, ſhould riſe from the dead, on his firſt appearance, your ſurprize might lead you to ſuſpect your own ſenſes: but ſhould he continue with you, converſe freely, as before his death, and eat with you, ſhould you not know him to be the ſame? Might not the ſiſters and friends of Lazarus, (if we admit that he was raiſed) know certainly, that it was the ſame brother and friend, whoſe death they deplored? Should the fallacy of our ſenſes be objected in ſuch a caſe, why not in any other, depending on *their* report? Why may we not queſtion, whether any of thoſe, with whom we converſe from day to day, are really living?

The Apoſtles conſtantly attended, and were moſt intimate with their maſter, for ſeveral years, next preceding his death. They teſtify, that in their preſence, and before many others, friends and foes, he cauſed the blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to riſe—that he

healed all manner of diſeaſe inſtantly with his word, and did many other wonderful works—that they followed him to his trial, and to the croſs—ſaw him crucified, and give up the ghoſt. They further teſtify, that they ſaw him alive, after his paſſion—that he continued forty days with them, bringing to their recollection things he had before ſaid to them, eating with them, ſhewing them his hands and feet, in which was viſible, the print of the nails that faſtened him to the croſs, and ſhewing them the ſide pierced by the ſpear.—Could they not judge of what they ſaw, heard and handled? Are the unlearned more liable to impoſition in diſtinguiſhing perſons, whom they have ſeen and been converſant with, than the learned? From the frequent appearances of Jeſus to the Apoſtles, ſingly, or to two, or more, or all of them; and to them all, when in company with many others; at one time, to more than five hundred, they had full opportunity to know, whether he was, indeed, riſen.

But if the Apoſtles were competent judges of the reſurrection, we infer hence, that they were alſo *competent witneſſes* of it. Let us then ſhew, *ſecondly*, the juſtneſs of this inference.

If being eye, and ear-witneſſes, they were in a capacity and ſituation to judge whether Jeſus had riſen, their teſtimony is not to be rejected, merely on account of the *nature* of ſuch a fact. For this would imply, that they could not determine for

themſelves, whether that was real, which they ſaw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and their hands handled: Their capacity to judge, and their capacity to teſtify, muſt, therefore, be alike admitted, or denied. If their teſtimony may be ſuſpected on the ſcore of *intereſt* or *deſign*; this is quite another matter. Their *integrity*, in bearing teſtimony to the reſurrection, is a diſtinct thing, from their *capacity* to give witneſs in ſuch a caſe.

They were, however, as *credible* witneſſes as they were *competent*: Their number was ſufficient; their character was not doubtful. They had no intereſt to ſerve. In the manner of delivering their teſtimony they did not heſitate, nor aſſert with warmth, as falſe witneſſes do. The union of their teſtimony ſtrengthens and confirms it. There are no contrary teſtimonies to balance theirs.—They ſacrificed every thing dear in life, and life itſelf, to the word of their teſtimony. Theſe things might be diſtinctly evinced. But it is not my preſent buſineſs to examine, particularly, the original teſtimonies to the reſurrection of Jeſus.

One further obſervation may properly be added here: It is this: If the Apoſtles bore falſe witneſs, this muſt have been, at leaſt, *equally miraculous*, as the fact they teſtified. For in confirmation of this fact they were, in the preſence of thouſands, from all nations, enabled to ſpeak inſtantly, readily, and forcibly in the tongues of all nations, having never learned. If you deny that the diſciples

were thus filled with the Holy Ghoſt, on a public Jewiſh feſtival, then all the vaſt concourſe, aſſembled on that occaſion, were deceived in the report of their ſenſes; and, at the expence of demonſtration, ſhould have diſbelieved. Or you muſt maintain, that neither had the diſciples the gift of tongues, nor was there any ſuch concourſe of nations, who ſuppoſed they had. The conſequence will then be, that the New Teſtament writers have declared, as a fact of the greateſt notoriety, a matter, the falſhood of which, they knew, was palpable to all in Jeruſalem; and declared it to be a confirmation of another matter, as notoriouſly falſe: to which falſhood they pertinaciouſly adhered, and ſacrificed their lives. Men have died martyrs to falſe opinions: But when have they thrown away life, in aſſerting things as facts, which the public knew had no exiſtence?

The diſpenſation of the Holy Ghoſt after the aſcenſion, in tongues, prophecy and miracles, was the laſt ſanction of divine authority ſet to the religion of Jeſus. Theſe gifts were continued in the church, through the apoſtolic age at leaſt; that is, about ſixty years. They were exhibited in all places, and before all ranks. Thus was *the Holy Ghoſt a witneſs of the reſurrection*. Theſe gifts were as great miracles, as the reſurrection which they confirmed. What further or greater witneſs to the truth of Chriſtianity could there be? They who ſaw theſe miraculous powers, had the greateſt reaſon to believe the reſurrection, though they ſaw

not Jeſus after he roſe from the dead. They, who withſtood this witneſs of the Holy Ghoſt, could not be perſuaded by any. Some, who ſaw and acknowledged the miracles of Jeſus, and of his firſt diſciples, yet demanded further witneſs. Their minds were cloſed againſt conviction; as were the minds of others, who departed from the faith. Hence the declaration reſpecting apoſtates in the primitive church, that having fallen away, after their *illumination and participation of the Holy Ghoſt, it was impoſſible to renew them again to repentance.*

Let us attend to this point, that the miniſters of the Chriſtian Religion confirmed it after its author returned to Heaven, by the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from thence. Had thoſe, who ſaw the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, ſufficient reaſon to believe on ſuch proof? If they had, then the reſurrection of Jeſus might be proved to thoſe who did not ſee him by the teſtimony of thoſe who did. For theſe conſtantly declared, that their miraculous gifts were conferred on them by Jeſus, and for the purpoſe of proving his reſurrection. All, therefore, who believed their commiſſion, on the evidence of theſe gifts, muſt alſo have believed that Jeſus was riſen. But if thoſe, who ſaw the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt after the aſcenſion, had yet no ſufficient reaſon to believe, then, miracles are not proof even to thoſe who ſee them. A revelation is impoſſible, for it cannot be confirmed.

Enough, perhaps, hath been ſaid to ſhew, that thoſe, who enjoyed the miniſtry of the Apoſtles,

had abundant reaſon to receive their teſtimony concerning Jeſus, confirmed as it was by the powers wherewith they were endowed. In other words, it may be laudable to believe, though we have not ſeen. It is no excuſe for unbelief, that men have not been eye-witneſſes of the reſurrection.

If then the religion of Jeſus was fully confirmed in the apoſtolic age; was this original confirmation ſufficient for after ages? Is revelation binding on thoſe only who ſee its miraculous confirmation? May it not concern all men, of all nations? Muſt it then be confirmed by a perpetual miracle before every individual, of every nation? Chriſtianity hath not been thus confirmed. It has not been thus confirmed before our eyes. Shall we therefore ſay, that it doth not oblige all to whom it comes—that we ourſelves are not obliged to believe and obey?

We muſt needs be very incompetent to judge beforehand, after what manner a revelation from God would be confirmed. But ſurely we cannot object to evidence, ſimilar to that we have, for the being and providence of God. The original evidence for Chriſtianity was of this kind. Succeeding ages have had miraculous evidence alſo, in the obvious and conſtant fulfilment of prophecy. In the *internal* frame of Chriſtianity, its doctrines, morals and motives, we have the ſame proof of it, as they had in the beginning. And may we not contemplate theſe internal characters with more

deliberation than they could, when the overbearing evidence of miracles compelled an immediate aſſent? The *external* evidence alſo, from the accompliſhment of prophecy, may be more coolly examined. The miraculous fact alſo, that perſons of ſuch rank and circumſtances, publiſhed ſuch a Religion, may now be weighed more fully than when the ſplendor of their miracles foreclоſed enquiry. At the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity, the world was ſunk in every kind of ſuperſtition and idolatry; loſt to the knowledge of the true God, whatever were the improvements in other knowledge. Was there the like occaſion for miracles after Chriſtianity was once introduced, and had made its way againſt an *intereſted prieſthood*, the *pride of philoſophy*, the *ſword of the magiſtrate*, and *popular zeal?* It might well be left to continue and extend itſelf by its own intrinſic evidence, and the accompliſhment of its prophecies, added to its original confirmation. Is there the leaſt propriety in calling for new witneſſes of its facts, when the original witneſſes have been long ſince dead? Or in demanding, as a condition of our faith, that ſimilar facts take place before our eyes? The foes to this Religion, when it was firſt ſet up, ſaw, to their confuſion and amazement, the facts it records. By irreſiſtible demonſtration they were compelled to acknowledge the facts, while they obſtinately denied the *conſequence*, inſiſting that they were performed through the agency of the Devil. The modern infidel takes a different part. He boldly

denies the *facts*, from a conviction, that if theſe are admitted, they eſtabliſh our Religion. But the burden of proof lies on him, not on us. Thus it is in all caſes where men deny ancient facts, once well known and eſtabliſhed; facts, which could never have gained belief, but on the ſuppoſition of their reality. The original witneſſes could not but believe what they heard and ſaw. What they declared from perſonal knowledge, ought to be received on their teſtimony; allowing them to be unexceptionable witneſſes, in other reſpects. One fact they teſtified, which, if true, proved Jeſus to be the Chriſt of God. Of this fact, the reſurrection, thoſe who heard their teſtimony, had miraculous proof; though they ſaw not the riſen Saviour. For the works, done by theſe his diſciples in his name, confirmed their teſtimony. Thus was the truth of Chriſtianity proved by miracles to them, who ſaw not our Lord after he roſe from the dead. The miraculous gifts of the ſpirit are called in queſtion at this diſtance of time. But by whom? We undertake to ſay by thoſe, and *thoſe only, who, had they ſeen theſe gifts, would ſtill have denied, that Jeſus was riſen;* or had they ſeen him after he roſe, would ſtill have denied his divine miſſion.

Some men undertake to reaſon on matters of fact in this ſort; 'We cannot inveſtigate the *cauſe*, therefore the facts never exiſted.' This is a mode of reaſoning which at once denies all kind of exiſtence, finite or infinite. It denies the exiſtence

even of the reaſoner himſelf; though it is certain he could not reaſon, did he not exiſt. Yet ſuch, if I miſtake not, is the reaſoning of the ſceptical Mr. Hume againſt revelation. We reaſon *from* matters of fact—but in the enquiry *whether* they are fact, reaſon and argument have no place.—They are either perſonally known, or depend on teſtimony. If perſonally known, this is intuition, or demonſtration, and therefore, precludes all reaſoning. If dependant on teſtimony, the only enquiry is, whether the witneſſes are competent, and credible. Nothing can be more impertinent than to ſuſpend belief, till the nature and cauſe of the facts are explained. In this view, neither a miracle, nor any other fact, is a ſubject of *argument* :—But is either, therefore, a ſubject of *deriſion? He*, rather, is a ſubject of deriſion, who thus applies argument and reaſoning—equally ſo, whether the facts, about which he thus reaſons and argues, are ordinary, extraordinary, or miraculous. It doth not exceed the power of God, to perform a miracle; nor doth it contradict any divine perfection. If a miracle is poſſible, it may be an object of faith, as much as the exiſtence of a material world, or any thing in nature. It was moſt diſhonorable to the underſtanding or integrity of Mr. Hume, to ſay, that, " In proportion, as a fact is marvellous or unuſual, the evidence of teſtimony is diminiſhed ;" and, " deſtroyed, if the fact be miraculous"—that, " there is a direct and full proof, or an uniform experience, from *the nature of the*

fact, againſt the exiſtence of a miracle"—that, "a miracle, ſupported by any teſtimony, is a ſubject of deriſion rather than argument." We ſhould merit deriſion, did we undertake to argue reſpecting the *exiſtence* of a miracle. But if we ſee the dead raiſed up, we will *own the finger of God*. We will not withhold our aſſent, till we firſt know *how the dead are raiſed*. A reſurrection is poſſible—is a miracle—and may be known to be fact, with as much certainty as any common fact. But on the principles above quoted, not only is a revelation impoſſible, but any ſpecial interpoſition of heaven, is equally ſo. The whole doctrine of divine providence is denied. The all-wiſe Creator and Governor of the Univerſe, is chained down to the original laws of nature.

We have mentioned the accompliſhment of prophecy, as a ſtanding and miraculous confirmation of revelation. One illuſtration of this point, may, not improperly, be introduced in this place; I mean, the deſolation of Jeruſalem and diſperſion of the Jews. The prophecies and the events, are well known. In order to defeat our Lord's prophecy, Julian the apoſtate, A. D. 361, undertook to rebuild the temple on its former foundation, and to people Jeruſalem with Jews. He committed the principle direction of the work to Alypius, whoſe "abilities and diligence were ſtrenuouſly ſupported by the governor of Paleſtine, and the zeal of the Jews, aſſembled from all the provinces. Every purſe was opened, and every

hand claimed a ſhare in the labor." But *there is no counſel againſt the Lord.* "On this occaſion, the joint efforts of power and enthuſiaſm, were unſucceſsful. An earthquake, a whirlwind, and a fiery eruption, which overturned and ſcattered the new foundations of the temple, are atteſted," (as an enemy allows) "by cotemporary and reſpectable evidence"—particularly, "by the unexceptionable teſtimony of Ammianus Marcellinus." Mr. *Gibbon*, however, intimates a doubt, whether ſuch prodigies really took place, by adding; "A philoſopher may ſtill require the original evidence of impartial and intelligent ſpectators;" and by hinting at other cauſes which might fruſtrate the attempt—this among others, that it was undertaken, "only in the laſt ſix months of Julian's life." Would this hiſtorian undertake to defend the ſentiment, that a philoſopher may require other than *cotemporary*, *reſpectable*, and *unexceptionable* evidence to a matter of fact? Had an hiſtorian of that age taken pains to ſelect particular teſtimonies to an event, to which many thouſands were witneſſes, for months together, after times might well have ſuppoſed, that the hiſtorian knew there was room to queſtion the fact. The appeal in general, to thouſands then living, an uncontradicted appeal, hath at leaſt as great weight as any particular teſtimonies. The vigilance and malice of the Jews, would have prompted them to the moſt ſevere animadverſions, on this ſtory of a miraculous interpoſition of providence, had it

been fabulous. Was not a ſpace of *ſix months* ſufficient to have laid the foundations of the work, when ſuch great exertions were made?

But ſuppoſe there was no "real prodigy," nothing more than ſome "ſingular accident of nature," on this occaſion. Is the fulfilment of the prophecy leſs apparent? The reſtoration of the temple was undertaken—undertaken with deſign to defeat the prophecy, and thereby overthrow Chriſtianity. The Chriſtians, through three centuries, appealed to the deſolation of Jeruſalem, as a fact which confirmed their religion. Civil power united with Jewiſh zeal and inveteracy, could not repair the ruined temple and capital. The reparation of them has been the ruling paſſion of the Jews, in every age; but is not yet effected. Theſe facts are all admitted. The conſequence is obvious; that the exertions to baffle, have but the more ſignally fulfilled the prediction, *Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* The ruin was at firſt without a parallel. The duration of the ruin is ſo, all circumſtances conſidered. Both were circumſtantially foretold. All ſucceeding ages have been witneſſes to the accompliſhment. More than fifteen hundred years before their deſolation, Moſes propheſied, that the Jews ſhould be *removed into all kingdoms of the earth, and be an aſtoniſhment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations.* They have accordingly been for ſeventeen full centuries ſucceſſively, an example in all the earth, of the

righteous ſeverity of God; exiles, an opprobrium, an aſtoniſhment, oppreſſed, kept a diſtinct people. "They no where live according to their own laws, no where elect their own magiſtrates, no where enjoy the full exerciſe of their Religion. They flow into all parts of the world, mix with all nations, and yet keep ſeparate from all. The northern nations have come in ſwarms into the more ſouthern parts of Europe; but where are they now to be diſcerned and diſtinguiſhed? The Gauls went forth in great bodies to ſeek their fortune in foreign parts; but what traces of them are now remaining any where? In France, who can ſeparate the race of the ancient Gauls, from the various other people, who, from time to time, have ſettled there? In Spain, who can diſtinguiſh between the firſt poſſeſſors, the Spaniards, and the Goths, and the Moors, who conquered and kept poſſeſſion of the country for ſome ages? In England, who can pretend to ſay which families were deſcended from the ancient Britons, and which from the Romans, or Saxons, or Danes, or Normans?— The moſt ancient and honorable pedigrees can be traced up, only to a certain period, and beyond that, there is nothing but conjecture and uncertainty, obſcurity and ignorance. But the Jews can go up higher than any nation. They can even deduce their pedigree from the beginning of the world. They may not know from what particular tribe, or family, they are deſcended, but they know certainly, that they all ſprung from the

ſtock of Abraham. After ſo many wars, maſſacres, perſecutions, and the contempt with which they have been treated, they ſtill ſubſiſt, and profeſs, and glory in their original. If the hand of Providence is not viſible in theſe things, where will it be found?"*

Is not the accompliſhment of prophecy as ample a teſtimony to Chriſtianity, as the miracles of the firſt century were? An attentive obſerver of theſe things, will have no occaſion to requeſt a meſſenger from the dead, that he may believe.—We have no reaſon to look for any other miraculous teſtimony to Chriſtianity, than that of prophecy, till the time of the reſtoration of the Jews.

The *other* propoſition to be diſcuſſed, is this: There is no probability that thoſe, who withſtand a revelation once confirmed, would be perſuaded, by the propoſed method of one coming to them from the other world—one, whom they once well knew on earth.

The words have immediate reference to the aſſurances of a future ſtate of miſery, contained in Moſes and the prophets; but are equally applicable to a future ſtate of happineſs, (Matt. xxii. 31, 32.) and to the general evidence of religion and a life to come. If the evidence, from Moſes and the prophets, were ſufficient, well may this be ſaid of the Chriſtian inſtitution, which brings life and immortality to light.

* Doctor NEWTON.

God, the only fit judge, has given ſuch confirmation to Chriſtianity, as ſeemed good to him. Is he obliged, on the demand of the infidel, to renew the original confirmation, or add any other of the ſame, or an higher kind? Shall he be directed in what manner to confirm his revelations—what evidence is beſt adapted to moral agents? Would the rejecters of a religion, to which he hath once borne witneſs, be perſuaded, were it again confirmed in the ſame, or ſome other manner? Iſrael were witneſſes to a conſtant miracle, forty years in the wilderneſs, and during many centuries in Canaan; but as conſtantly rebelled through unbelief. The Phariſees, who ſaw the miracles of Jeſus, ſtill required a ſign. May every age, country and perſon, demand a new confirmation of Chriſtianity; and inſiſt, *except we ſee ſigns and wonders, we will not believe?* One may, with as much propriety as another, inſiſt, that nothing ſhort of miraculous evidence ſhall perſuade. This, however, is a temper which is not perſuaded by miracles. Would the tragedy of the crucifixion, and triumph of the reſurrection, if perpetually diſplayed, work conviction in thoſe, who are not convinced by the ſtanding teſtimony of God in the ſcriptures? This is, moreover, to require impoſſibilities. For how could Chriſt be crucified, and riſe before the eyes of every man, in every age?

Omnipotence could irreſiſtibly convert ſinners, or raiſe up a ſpiritual ſeed from the ſtones. Heaven might be ſet open before us, and hell without a

covering. Moral evil might have been prevented, and conſequently natural. But mankind are treated as moral agents and probationers.

Were it left to us to ſay what evidence is fit and neceſſary to eſtabliſh a revelation, one would inſiſt on this kind, another on that. No two perſons might agree on the ſame atteſtation. No finite mind is competent to judge beforehand, what evidence would beſt anſwer the purpoſe of perſuaſion. All will agree, that ſhould any general confirmation be fixed upon, it would be ſuch as all men can underſtand, becauſe all men are alike concerned in the ſubject.

If miracles, *once* performed, and the *conſtant* evidence, in the fulfilment of prophecy, and the internal characters of the Chriſtian religion, do not prevail on men to believe and live according to it, what reaſon is there to ſuppoſe, that the renewal of miracles would have this effect? What reaſon is there to ſuppoſe, that thoſe who are now infidels, would not have been ſo, had they lived in Chriſt's day, or in the Apoſtolic age? What probability, that one coming to them from the dead, could perſuade them? The ſtanding aſſurances of future retributions, contained in the Bible, are more juſt matter of conviction, than any which, we might preſume, a meſſenger from the dead would bring. Suppoſe this meſſenger to be one whom the unbeliever was acquainted with, doubtleſs it would be a great ſurpriſe at firſt, to ſee him riſen from the

dead. But the ſurpriſe would be tranſient. Should he immediately diſappear, after the delivery of his meſſage, no ſooner would the unbeliever's firſt aſtoniſhment be over, than he would begin to ſuſpect, that the whole was deluſion.

Further, If this requeſt, that a meſſenger might come from the dead, be reaſonable in one inſtance, it muſt be ſo in another, and in every inſtance.—Should it be gratified in every inſtance, the effect would be loſt in the frequency and commonneſs of ſuch meſſengers.

The crime of the rich man's brethren is ſuppoſed to have been *practical*, rather than *ſpeculative* infidelity. They did not give ſo much attention to the ſubject of revelation, as deep ſpeculations in infidelity, imply. Heedleſs inattention to religion, is an inſeparable attendant on a life of diſſipation. This is much the ſame in its influence on morality, religion, and futurity, as direct ſcepticiſm, and often terminates therein. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God.* This is the natural conſequence of the character aſcribed to him. *Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not ſeek after God—God is not in all his thoughts.* Experience, in another world, firſt convinced the rich man of the ruinous iſſue of a life of irreligion and diſſolute manners. To reject a religion, confirmed as Chriſtianity hath been, and coming recommended as this doth, by its doctrines and pre-

cepts, example and promiſes, *is to determine, not to receive a revelation from Heaven.* The aſſurances it gives of future retributions, and which the reſurrection of its author have confirmed, are not weighed; perhaps, not ſo much as read. They are practically diſbelieved. Admonitions unregarded, are as though their authority was expreſsly rejected. No kind of evidence, which licentious men may aſk for themſelves, will ſuffice.—For if they will not examine, or attend to the evidence actually laid before them, neither would they attend to any other. They do not conſider, at all, the nature and tendency of the courſe they are purſuing. Having *pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*, they *love darkneſs rather than light.* There are others, in whom *ſpeculative pride* is predominant.—Theſe will not believe, becauſe they reſolve to admit nothing on the common principles of evidence. They muſt think out of the road of common ſenſe, to ſhew the world the ſuperiority of their talents. Thus, *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they become fools.*

IMPROVEMENT.

From what hath been diſcourſed, we may form a judgment of thoſe who employ their talents to diminiſh the evidences of Chriſtianity, and deſtroy its authority. To reject it without enquiry, muſt be a mark of great folly; not to mention the poſſible impiety of ſuch conduct. To make it a ſubject of enquiry, and yet determine beforehand

not to embrace it, *is unfair*. The doctrine of our accountableneſs of a future life, as there taught, ſo well accords with the ſentiments of the human heart, if not hardened, that we cannot object on this account. We may rather wiſh for the authority of revelation to confirm, and enforce the operations of our own minds.

It is at leaſt poſſible, and there is a degree of probability, that there may be a ſtate of future retributions, in which we ſhall receive the conſequences of our preſent moral conduct. If there is, revelation *only* can inform us; to be ſure, it can *beſt* inform us, how to demean ourſelves in this probationary ſtate, ſo as to ſhun the miſery and ſecure the happineſs, of the life to come. What argument have we to ſhew that this life is the whole of our exiſtence? What thanks do we owe to the man who would perſuade us that it is, or would lead us to live as though it were? Is he a friend of virtue, or of our peace? This world is a moſt important part of our exiſtence, when viewed in reference to another, and as our probation for eternal recompences. On the bare poſſibility of ſuch a world to come, it is the higheſt wiſdom to lay up a good foundation againſt the time when we ſhall paſs into it. Such proviſion for that world, will not leſſen, but increaſe the real enjoyments of this world, and render us far better members of ſociety. Whoſoever, then, would eraſe from our minds a ſenſe of moral obligation, and ſubvert the foundations of virtue, co-operates with the enemy

of all righteouſneſs, to ſpread confuſion and miſery in the world. If he boaſts of ſuperior talents, he may be told, that, while the giver of his talents is entitled to his gratitude, and ſhould direct the application of all his powers, Satan hath the direction of them. For ſuch, what remedy is provided? *If the light which is in* thee *be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs!*

Further, A general habit of inattention, and indifference to the truths and precepts of revealed religion, is much the ſame in its effects, as an open denial of them. On ſuch, inſtructions and admonitions are loſt. The realities of eternity are treated as idle tales. They do not conſider, becauſe they will not be diſturbed in their amuſements, ſenſual indulgencies and worldly purſuits. Overcharged with theſe, the *ſolemnities of death, a reſurrection, a judgment to come, and eternal rewards and puniſhments, make but a feeble impreſſion, if any at all.* Some imminent danger may give a preſent alarm, but no ſooner is the immediate hazard removed, than they return to folly without any concern. An affluence and continued proſperity, are often accompanied with forgetfulneſs and contempt of religion. The rich man and his brethren were liſtleſs to the concerns of futurity. They believed not Moſes and the prophets. *They feared not God, becauſe they had no changes.* In ſuch circumſtances, there is much occaſion to guard againſt luxury, voluptuouſneſs, uncharitableneſs and a ſpirit of ſelf-ſufficiency.

Faith and repentance, are of univerſal importance, unalterably connected with each other, and with the hope of divine acceptance. The true believer, the true penitent, is conformed to the image of Chriſt.

God knows what means are beſt adapted to the end of our faith: He hath eſtabliſhed theſe means; he hath annexed to the diligent uſe of them, every encouragement of his concurrence and bleſſing.—To neglect and vilify them, or deviſe other means of acceptation, is to deſpiſe God, and make his revelation uſeleſs.

He that hath an ear, let him hear. "Search the ſcriptures—in them we have eternal life—they teſtify of Chriſt." The language of God in them is, REVERENCE MY SON. In him, in no other, is God reconciling the world to himſelf. In vain muſt thoſe intercede for mercy in the other world, who will not be perſuaded through Chriſt, to be reconciled to God, in this accepted time, this day of ſalvation. *Then* the door will be ſhut. *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved; he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* Neglect not the means of grace. *Quench not the ſpirit. If they eſcaped not,* who refuſed to hear Moſes and the prophets, *we* ſurely *ſhall* not eſcape, *if we neglect ſo great ſalvation; which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God alſo, bearing them witneſs by ſigns and wonders, divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt.*

SERMON X.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

BY

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MATT. vii. 28, 29.

And it came to paſs when Jeſus had ended theſe ſayings, the people were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

THESE words are St. Matthew's reflection on our Lord's well-known ſermon, contained in this and two preceding chapters. When he had finiſhed his diſcourſe, the multitude, who heard it, *were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine*: The reaſon of their aſtoniſhment is aſſigned. *For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* His inſtruction was very different from theirs, both with reſpect to the matter and manner of it. His countenance might ſtrongly expreſs the weight of the truths he taught. He alſo lived according to his own maxims; whereas, *they ſaid, and did not.*

What I propoſe is, *firſt*, to lay before you an imperfect ſketch of the morality of our religion.

Secondly, to ſhew that on this account, it merits the high approbation and eſteem of all to whom it is offered.

Thirdly, that the ſuperior excellence of its moral ſyſtem, proves the truth of Chriſtianity.

Firſt, I am to lay before you an imperfect ſketch of the moral ſyſtem of Chriſtianity. This is ſummarily contained in that diſcourſe of its divine author, on which the Evangeliſt makes the reflection in the words read.

Here it will be proper to ſpecify the principal virtues which Chriſtianity inculcates, whether perſonal, ſocial, or divine—to conſider the foundation and motives on which it inculcates them—and to take a view of the correſponding example of its author,

I would, *firſt*, ſpecify the principal virtues, perſonal, ſocial, and divine, inculcated by our Religion.

The virtues of *ſelf-government* are theſe; moderation in our worldly wiſhes and enjoyments; contentment and freedom from anxious care; meekneſs and patience under injuries and provocations; humility or poverty of ſpirit, not thinking of ourſelves more highly than we ought, but ſoberly, not exerciſing ourſelves in things too high for us. By forbidding inward luſt and hatred, it lays the ax at

the root of the tree, and teacheth us with what care to keep the heart, that it may be clean from all allowed impurity.

As to the *ſocial* virtues, our Lord in his diſcourſe enjoined the greateſt ſimplicity and integrity in our intercourſe with others, by directing that our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay. He cautioned againſt uncharitable thoughts and cenſures. He pronounced the merciful and peace-makers bleſſed. He has taught us to ſeek timely reconciliation of thoſe whom we have offended—to diſpenſe our alms in the moſt private manner, and to all who may ſtand in need—to forgive injuries, however great, or how oft ſoever repeated; to love our enemies, bleſs them that curſe us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them who deſpitefully uſe and perſecute us, that we may be the children of our heavenly Father. His ſun riſeth on the evil and good, and his rain falls on the juſt and unjuſt. Our goodneſs extendeth not to him; but, like his, it ſhould extend to all without diſcrimination, as we may have opportunity to do them good.

This diſtinguiſheth Chriſtian benevolence from other kinds. Ties of affinity or blood, friendſhip or former obligations, union in religious profeſſion or in ſecular purſuits, ſimilarity of afflictions or dangers, and even a combination in wickedneſs, attach men to one another, and prompt them to kind offices. Sinners and publicans love thoſe

who love them, and do good to thoſe who do good to them, or whoſe intereſt may be conſidered as their own. But Jeſus has taught his diſciples to *do more than others.* Chriſtian benevolence is finely illuſtrated in the ſtory he relates of the traveller, who on his journey fell into the hands of mercileſs robbers, and in the depths of diſtreſs found relief from an unexpected quarter. This unfortunate man was a Jew. He that ſhewed mercy on him was a Samaritan. There was a deeply rooted enmity between the two nations. Notwithſtanding this, the Jew, ready to periſh, was befriended by the Samaritan, after he had been neglected by one and another of his own nation, and thoſe, perſons of an high religious profeſſion. Forgetting any national prejudices and affronts, conſidering not at all the *character* of the helpleſs man, but only his *neceſſity*, the compaſſionate Samaritan felt his bowels moved, and inſtantly miniſtred to his relief. Thus was he neighbor to him. Such is the love of our neighbor which Chriſtianity enjoins. This is to obſerve the golden rule, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.* The reaſonableneſs of this rule applies to the ſenſe and feeling of every man, however difficult and rare a conformity to it may be.

With reſpect to the duties of *piety*, how different are the Chriſtian precepts from thoſe of the Scribes? From an affected deference to rites and ceremonies, they neglected the weightier matters of the divine law, judgment, mercy and faith.

They condemned our Lord's disciples for attending to a matter of necessity, on the sabbath, and him for doing good on that day. By their traditions they made void both moral and positive precepts. The Christian lawgiver declared their worship vain, and taught a righteousness far superior—to avoid all ostentation and affected severities, and to worship, not with the eye, but with the heart—to attend the forms of religion ordained by God, as necessary means of cultivating a spirit of piety, of expressing a supreme reverence, esteem and confidence towards the great object of our homage—means, also, of exciting and improving our love to men. For according to him, the whole of religion is comprehended in the love of God and our neighbor. The former is the first and great commandment, and the latter is like unto it. External worship is, in no instance, required, further than it is subservient to this temper of love. Christianity rescues the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, from the corrupt glosses of men who thanked God that they were exempt from gross scandal, when within they were full of all uncleanness; who, under pretence of zeal for God, devoured widows' houses, persecuted the just, and undertook to absolve children from their duty to their parents. The Christian scheme of morality admits of no reserves: for no man can serve two masters. It requires a firm adherence to its injunctions, though persecuted for righteousness sake. It extends to the heart and thoughts, as well as to the lips and life.

Conſider then the purity, ſublimity and extent of the Chriſtian morals; their perpetuity, as Heaven. Compare them with the celebrated ſchemes of heathen philoſophers and moraliſts, or of modern deiſts. The latter confine the rule of moral obligation very much to external conduct, without reference to the heart; or they limit morality to viſible ſobriety and juſtice—or at moſt, extend it no further than the pretended virtues of friendſhip and patriotiſm. They fall as much ſhort of the Chriſtian ſcheme, as an occaſional (perhaps unintentional) act of generoſity, falls ſhort of a ſteady and uniform courſe of benevolent action—or as doing good to one who has obliged us, or whoſe welfare is as our own, falls ſhort of kind offices performed to our revilers and perſecutors.

The love of our country is indeed an illuſtrious virtue, when connected with love to mankind, of every nation. But if it interferes with univerſal benevolence, it is no other than the narrow ſpirit of a party, and hath the ſame aſpect on the welfare of other nations, as ſelfiſhneſs hath on the welfare of our own; or, as party-zeal in religion, hath on all denominations, except its own. Chriſtian morality includes private friendſhip, and the love of our nation. At the ſame time it inculcates more elevated and extenſive benevolence, *peace on earth, good will to all mankind.*

It is brave, we grant, to hazard life for the public liberties; but is it ſo, to throw away life in a

duel? or to fall on one's own ſword? He that doth the latter, acts the part of the coward, who meanly deſerts the poſt of danger aſſigned him by his General. He that doth the former is like one who, to ſave his houſe when on fire, ſhould throw himſelf into the flames. Both deſerve the burial of an aſs. They ſacrifice the honor and comfort of all their dependents and friends, the private and public affections, to a ſmall misfortune, to imaginary honor. When, on the contrary, men acquieſce in evils they cannot prevent or remedy; when it is not in the power of external things to take from them their ſelf-enjoyment; when they avenge not themſelves; when they loſe life to ſave their country from ſlavery, or their own ſouls from perdition; this is true magnanimity; this is Chriſtian fortitude. For our faith overcomes the world: It teacheth patience and reſignation under ſufferings from God, and forgiveneſs of men whatever wrong they do or deſign us. It eſtabliſheth an inward ſerenity, and a firmneſs which makes the feeble and timorous more than conquerors.

Secondly, of the *foundation* or *principle* of Chriſtian morality. This is, the approbation and glory of God, or a regard to him as moral Governor. *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven.* Any ſyſtem which doth not fix moral virtue on the throne of God, will be found to fix it on a weak and precarious baſis. His perfections are immutable. Reſpect to his authority and approbation

is, therefore, a permanent, uniform principle of right action. The difference between good and evil is unchangeable, becauſe God is ſo, and becauſe his will is rectitude. He will always do what is fit:—He only knows what is ſo:—All relations and fitneſſes are from him and by him:—To him be glory for ever. His glory and the happineſs of his creatures unite. With him we have to do, who is God over all, who hath conſtituted the various connections and dependencies of mankind, the ſubordinations of families and larger ſocieties, and enjoined their mutual duties. *His authority is the higheſt poſſible obligation.* Whoever hearkens unto God will therefore pay due reſpect to earthly ſuperiors, and fulfil all relative duties; and, at the ſame time, will dare to aſſert the authority of conſcience and of God againſt any allurements or menaces whatever. This principle of piety operates alike in all relations and circumſtances of life, in all inſtances of ſocial or perſonal virtue, and at all times, whether we act under the view of others, or are retired from every human eye. The all-ſeeing eye of God, a ſenſe of his perfections and our accountableneſs, and this only, can ſecure us in the cauſe of virtue when temptation is ſtrong; when no power on earth can animadvert on our crimes, when we have every aſſurance of ſecrecy. Reputation, health, eaſe, gain, will, in ſome inſtances and to a certain degree, favor the cauſe of morality: but the *fear of God* is the only principle whereby we can attain to perfection in holineſs.

Chriſtian morality has ſpecial reſpect to the glory of God, through a MEDIATOR: It teacheth *whatever we do, to do it in the name of the Lord Jeſus. The fruits of righteouſneſs are by him to the praiſe and glory of God.* The faith of him peculiarly works by love to God and men.

Conſider, *next*, the *motives* which Chriſtianity exhibits, to enforce the admirable ſcheme of morality it inculcates.

Among the gracious words which proceeded from our Lord's mouth, and which his hearers ſo juſtly admired, are theſe:—*Aſk, and it ſhall be given you: Seek, and ye ſhall find: Knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things*, the holy Spirit, *to them that aſk him?* Therefore, (as it ſoon follows) *enter ye in at the ſtrait gate:—Take my yoke upon you, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls.* It is ample encouragement to our religious endeavors, if God is attentive to our neceſſities, as a parent to thoſe of his offſpring; will guide, ſupport, and ſucceed our religious labor. The objection to Chriſt our maſter is, therefore, without foundation, and dictated only by ſloth and depravity of heart;—*Thou art an hard man, reaping where thou haſt not ſown.—For unto every one that hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have abundance; but from him that*

hath not, ſhall be taken away even that which he hath. As the recompence of their labors and ſufferings in the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, the ſervants of Chriſt ſhall receive in the preſent time, an hundred fold for whatſoever they do or ſuffer in his cauſe; and, in the world to come, a diſtinguiſhed reward. *If we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him. If we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him.* Shall the difficulties of the Chriſtian life be objected, when we may, if we aſk it, have aid from on high? After all the labors and ſufferings of Jeſus for us, can we entertain this thought, that his commandments are grievous? What doth he command but this, that we deny ourſelves, and follow him? Shall the diſciple object that his Lord ſaith, *learn of me?* To whom elſe ſhall we go for the words of eternal life, but to Jeſus the Son of God? And can we go to him, while we refuſe or complain of his terms?

Unleſs we admit a future life, what ſufficient motives are there to virtue? Is it its own reward, when the oppreſſor hath power, and the oppreſſed have none to comfort them? Where is the beauty of virtue, when her friends are dropping into eternity, if they have no hope beyond the grave? The wiſeſt and beſt heathen were totally ignorant of the reſurrection, and had no other than unſettled, confuſed notions of future retributions; yea, they had many doubts even of the immortality of the ſoul, and were in darkneſs whether God would direct and aid human endeavors.

Their ſpeculations were rather refined than ſolid; at leaſt, the irmaxims were not exemplified. Adequate help, and proſpects were wanting. But Chriſtianity reveals the redemption of the body from corruption, and promiſeth eternal life to them who patiently continue in well-doing.—Through Chriſt's ſtrengthening them his diſciples can do all things. Their converſation is in Heaven, becauſe there he has prepared manſions for them:—He hath ſet before them motives to virtue, as much ſuperior to thoſe of heathen moraliſts, as the morality of the goſpel is ſuperior to theirs.

Laſtly, The perfect moral *character of Jeſus Chriſt*, exemplified all his heavenly maxims. Elevated as the morality of his religion is, he doth but call upon us *to imitate his example.* His private and perſonal virtues, his ſpotleſs innocence and purity of life, heavenly-mindedneſs and ſelf-denial, meekneſs, humility and patience, teach his followers an indifference to all things temporal; to purify themſelves, that they may reſemble him who was *holy, harmleſs, and ſeparate from ſinners*—teach them to bear reproach for him, *who when reviled, reviled not again; and when he ſuffered, threatened not.* Though from malignity his enemies accuſed him of many high crimes; yet they never could convict him of a fault. His converſation was without guile. His benevolence was manifeſt in emptying himſelf of the form of God, and appearing in faſhion as a man; revealing the way

of righteouſneſs and peace; going about doing good, to perſons of all conditions and characters; enduring with dignity, every ſpecies of diſtreſs and ignominy, from thoſe to whom he came to do all poſſible good; giving himſelf a ranſom for a guilty world. *Every other example ſinks and fades before* his. It *hath no part dark; all is light.*

High encomiums are paſſed on ſuch as expoſe life for a friend, or their country. What muſt we then ſay of him who died for enemies, for all mankind? None of the human race were endeared to him by any peculiar ties, antecedently to his interpoſing to ſave them from death. He could *not look on his own things,* when he undertook the cauſe of rebels. His philanthropy includes every kind affection that conſiſts with the greateſt good: It includes particular attention to our kindred, friends and country, ſo far as comports with moral rectitude, and the good of the univerſe. He loved a loſt world, and gave his life to ſave it. He was alſo ſuſceptible of the national and friendly affections. He *wept over Jeruſalem*; and at the grave of Lazarus, whom he loved. On the croſs, he beheld his mother with filial affection. His murderers were inſtant with one voice, *crucify him*; and he prayed, *Father forgive them.—He was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter.* While ſuch an example is before us, how ſhould our hearts burn within us! What bowels of mercies, humbleneſs of mind, long-ſuffering, forgiveneſs and charity, can anſwer to his example!

Further, conſider his *piety* and *devotion*. He oft reſorted, with his little family, to a place conſecrated to ſocial prayer. After days full of labor, his nights were often ſpent in this exerciſe. His watching opportunities for retirement, enforceth his injunction, *Enter into thy cloſet, and pray to thy Father which is in ſecret*. His example alſo ſhews, that the public rites of religion may not be neglected, though moral duties are to be preferred.

In becoming obedient to the death of the croſs, he ſhewed perfect acquieſcence in the will of his Father, appointing him to ſuffer and die. *The cup my Heavenly Father giveth me, ſhall I not drink it? Father, glorify thy name.* Aſſured that he ſhould *ſee of the travail of his ſoul; for the joy ſet before him, he endured the croſs.* How inſtructive is his example, in the principle and practice of all virtue? While it raiſeth our eſteem and admiration, the imitation of it would be our higheſt felicity and glory. Had we the ſame mind, all bitterneſs and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and envy, and malice, would be laid aſide; all treſpaſſes forgiven to them, that hate and perſecute us. Chriſt's command is, that we love one another, *as he hath loved us*. Then do we thus love, when we are ready, if need be, to *lay down our lives for the brethren*. For ſuch was *his* love. *He laid down his life for us*. If in this higheſt inſtance, our love emulates his pattern, *many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown* the flame. Every other expreſſion of love, is ſmall compared with this. But after the great-

eſt heights in this God-like virtue, his diſciples follow him at an unapproachable diſtance. Yet the nearer they copy the pattern he has left them, the better. *We have not reſiſted unto blood.* And ſhall common obſtacles diſcourage us? If, after the example of Chriſt, we are animated by *the joy ſet before* us, we ſhall *lay aſide every weight, and the ſin that eaſily beſets us, and run the Chriſtian race with patience, looking unto Jeſus.*

Though *ſinleſs* perfection is not the condition of ſalvation, yet *Chriſtian* perfection is. This denotes, *that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have our converſation in the world*—that every thought is brought into captivity to Chriſt. He requires, *give me thine heart.* A barren contemplation, or admiration of his ſayings and example will be unavailing. The ſame mind muſt be in us, or we build on the ſand. If we follow him whitherſoever he goes, then we build on a rock.

From the foregoing ſketch of the morality of our religion, we proceed to ſhew,

Secondly, that it merits the high approbation of all to whom it is offered.

The divine original of Chriſtianity is neither taken for granted, nor the ſubject of enquiry, in this place. The Deiſt allows the morality of it, to be ſuperior to that of any ſyſtem, which the world ever before received.

The Chriſtian precepts of purity, frugality and temperance, conduce to health of body and ſere-

nity of mind, fit men to endure hardneſs, to face danger. Its precepts of doing to others as we would they ſhould do to us, of loving our neighbor as ourſelves, naturally conciliate friendſhip and eſteem, and diffuſe benevolence and peace. Suppoſe a ſociety compoſed of members of ſuch a character, each regarding the property and reputation, life and liberty, ſecurity and comfort of his neighbor, and of the community, as his own; none invading the rights of another, or of the ſociety; but all dwelling in unity, conſpiring to promote the intereſt of each other, and of the whole. Suppoſe alſo that the fear of God is the ſupreme, reigning principle with them. How happy muſt ſuch a ſociety be in itſelf? How reſpectable in the view of other communities? *If one member ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it: If one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.* Should there be a diverſity of opinion on common concerns, mutual truſt and condeſcention would prevent any ill effects. Should any from without be ſo injurious as to invade their rights, ſuch invaders muſt be under peculiar diſadvantage. United in affection, having no domeſtic enemies, collecting all its wiſdom and force againſt the invaſion, confiding in public virtue and the divine defence, ſuch a ſociety will riſe ſuperior to difficulties, and emerge from diſtreſs. *The foot of pride will be turned back, and the ſtout-hearted ſpoiled.* The ſpirit of love and religion in ſuch a ſociety befriends public liberty, and conſequently private, without which there can-

not be public. The wiſeſt and beſt men are exalted; and theſe exalt their nation. The laws are framed to the circumſtances of the ſociety; founded on ſtable principles of moral rectitude, not adapted to anſwer a temporary purpoſe merely, or gratify a capricious humor. From the higheſt to the loweſt, every one knows what treatment to expect, according to his behavior.

Such would be the ſtate of a community, acting on Chriſtian maxims. It would reſemble thoſe times when *they ſhall not hurt in all God's holy mountain*—when, as we expect, Jeſus ſhall reign *king of nations*. Who then but muſt highly applaud the Chriſtian ſcheme? And the rather, as no other contains ſuch an aſſemblage of moral virtues, or furniſheth aſſiſtance to the practice of all righteouſneſs and goodneſs, or exhibits ſuch a pattern, or ſuch hope of immortality. How deficient are all other ſchemes in the foundation and extent of moral obligation? In the ſanctions and rules of virtue? How many vices are inculcated by them as eminent virtues? How much greater ſtreſs is laid on rites and ceremonies, than on things of a moral nature and immutable obligation? How have the framers of them contradicted their own beſt maxims? When we have ſurveyed them, and find them unſatisfactory, we may contemplate Chriſtianity, the moral ſyſtem of which requires nothing that needs correction, or admits amendment; the author of which exhibited, in his own life, a perfect tranſcript of his own admirable rules.

We cannot contemplate his rules or example, without the higheſt approbation of both.

The moſt clear and honorable conceptions of the moral perfections and government of God, and the beſt inſtructions in the nature of his worſhip, are derived from the Chriſtian Religion. All who wiſh to know the true God, and become his true worſhippers, will therefore highly value the directions herein given. How did it claim the attention of ſuch as were *feeling after God, if haply they might find him?* Such as were paying homage to the Hoſt of Heaven, to the deified ſouls of men, to beaſts, birds, and reptiles, to gods of gold, ſilver, ſtone and wood? Among whom, every ſpecies of cruelty, impurity and immorality, was ſanctified with the name of religion.

Further: If Chriſtianity is calculated, in the beſt manner, to make all men, and all ſocieties of men, virtuous and happy, this muſt recommend it to every benevolent mind, every friend of virtue, every lover of his country and mankind. What veneration is due to the irreprehenſible character of Jeſus?—A character not merely harmleſs and unblemiſhed, but eminent above any for public and private virtues, for piety, humility and charity; and which no one, who hath any ſenſe of moral worth, can ſurvey, without wiſhing that it were, in a meaſure, his own. If Jeſus went about *doing good*, rendered bleſſing for curſing, and endured unexampled ſufferings with invincible patience

and magnanimity, *forgive* him *this wrong*. Forgive the non-reſiſtance of evil, and the benevolence *which paſſeth knowledge*, expreſſed in his *giving his life a ranſom for all*.

Some of the *friends* of Chriſtianity may have ſpoken on the ſubject of morals, in derogatory terms. It hath given them no occaſion to aſſign to the moral virtues a *low place*. It hath enjoined every virtue comprehended in love, divine or ſocial—enjoined them as the weightieſt matters, on the ſureſt foundation, by the ſtrongeſt motives, and brigheſt example. His diſciples know not what ſpirit they are of, if they depreciate the virtues for which the life of their Lord was conſpicuous, in which he demands their imitation of him.

The *foes* of Chriſtianity, on the other hand, have ſometimes reproached it as deficient in ſome principal moral virtues; and as having inculcated other things as virtues, which betray meanneſs and puſillanimity. We may with the greateſt truth deny the charge; and fix it on them. Shall ſuicide, murder, and ſpreading the ravages of war over the earth, to make all nations tributary to one, be extolled as virtuous? Valor, in the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, charity and peace, is to be admired; but in the cauſe of error, unrighteouſneſs, miſanthropy, private revenge, or diſcontentment with providence, what is it but brutal rage? In the former cauſe, what valor may compare with that which Chriſtianity inculcates and exempli-

ſies? In the latter, other ſyſtems may claim the honor as all their own. If we commend friendſhip, the friend of all mankind claims our eſteem above all others. Had all who have named his name, governed themſelves by the principles and maxims which he taught and lived, inſtead of ſpending their zeal about external rites, or peculiar opinions and profeſſions, it had been happy for church and ſtate. Chriſtianity would have appeared all glorious—*fair as the moon, clear as the ſun, and terrible as an army with banners.*

When the opinions and lives of many profeſſors are objected, we bluſh; and ſhould not know what to anſwer, if the corruptions of it were chargeable to Chriſtianity itſelf. But the enquiry is not, how have ſome of its profeſſed friends believed and practiſed? It is, *how did Jeſus himſelf teach and live?* and what would be the conſequence to the world, if all men learnt of him? However his religion may have been diſparaged by the miſapprehenſions and bad lives of profeſſors, or the miſrepreſentations and calumnies of open enemies, its moral ſyſtem is allowed to be better adapted to human virtue and happineſs than any other; and the author of it lived according to it. Our buſineſs, then, is not, by traducing his character, to leſſen the reſpect due to his maxims; but, from principles of benevolence and views of perſonal happineſs, to form ourſelves upon this ſyſtem, and uſe our influence that others may.

Suppoſe Jeſus to be no other than an human perſon, the eminence of his character as a teacher, and example of moral virtue, claims high reſpect. Whether we have any ſpecial connexion with him or not, we at leaſt ought to admire and copy his virtues, as we revere illuſtrious characters in hiſtory, and take them for models. We applaud their wiſdom, we dwell with pleaſure on the rehearſal of their excellent qualities. Shall then the author of Chriſtianity and his inſtitution be treated with neglect and ſcorn? Such treatment can proceed only from a mind unfriendly to univerſal virtue and happineſs—from a wiſh to overthrow the foundation of morality, which hath ever been conſidered as the ſupport of order and government. If Chriſtianity is not from Heaven, it hath done mankind no wrong. The benefits of it have been more and greater than can well be conceived. "The belief of it is the only principle which can retain men in a ſteady and uniform courſe of virtue, piety and devotion; or can ſupport them in the hour of diſtreſs, of ſickneſs and of death." "A total rejection of all religious and moral principles whatever," is the uſual conſequence of rejecting it. It is the commendation of Chriſtianity, that none hate it, but thoſe whoſe *deeds are evil.*

Some have repreſented the body of the human ſpecies as made for compliance and puniſhment. Thoſe have been extolled as heroes and patriots, whoſe moſt ſplendid actions have ſprung from no other motive than their own advancement on the

degradation of their people. Often are ſocieties and kingdoms torn with diſcord, and merged in diſtreſs, through the interfering views of different partizans. As to religion, the Deity is preſumed to be too great to require, or be pleaſed with, any acknowledgments from his creatures. The benevolence of a Deiſt may involve his deareſt connexions in a multitude of ſins, and teach his beſt friend to err fatally from the truth, or ſacrifice him to a tranſient paſſion. It ſcorns inferiors, and envies ſuperiors. The diſciple of Jeſus, on the contrary, feels the force of the following maxims: *All of you be ſubject one to another, and be clothed with humility. The eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of thee. Thoſe members of the body, which ſeem to be more feeble, are neceſſary.* Engaged in the ſame cauſe as his Lord, ſwayed by the ſame principles, formed on the ſame maxims, the diſciple comparatively forgets his own things in a concern for thoſe of others. Partial views and attachments are ſubordinated to univerſal benevolence. He doth not ſuffer ſin upon his brother. His benevolence prompts his exertions to convert his worſt enemies from the error of their way, ſave their ſouls from death, and hide a multitude of ſins. Chriſtian *charity envieth not, vaunteth not itſelf, ſeeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, and endureth all things.* It doth good to men of every deſcription, not ſeeking recompence on earth, but in heaven.

We now refer it to all judges of *taſte*, whether the *graces* which ſhone in the diſcourſes and life of

Jeſus have, on the whole, been tarniſhed by the wanton pens of the foes to his religion. What a mind muſt he have, who employs fine talents in wiping off from vice its deformity? Virtue can have no beauty, if vice is comely. The admirers of a noble lord may be aſked, whether his writings have not diſſeminated a moral contagion beyond all in the preſent age? If to draw an enticing picture of vice, to convey irreligion and profligacy in an agreeable channel, to pollute the morals of Chriſtendom, to initiate a favorite ſon in *the myſtery of iniquity*, be a worthy employment, this was the peculiar ornament of that nobleman's character. But if to ſeduce the age, inexperienced years eſpecially—if to ſeduce from the paths of virtue and integrity into thoſe of error and pollution, one of whoſe tender years nature and providence had appointed him the guardian—if to lay before the child of his hopes a ſyſtem replete with impiety to God and miſery to man, can mark a character with reproach, too heavy cenſure cannot fall on CHESTERFIELD.

It remains to be ſhewn, *thirdly*, that the ſuperior excellence of the Chriſtian morals proves this religion to be divine. If Jeſus were a mere man, how could he have delivered principles and maxims of life, which ſo much excel thoſe of the wiſeeſt philoſophers and moraliſts? He was not bred to letters. His parentage, education, and external circumſtances render it impoſſible that he ſhould be the author of ſuch a ſyſtem, if we deny his di-

vine miſſion. He had never learned, and yet ſpake *as never man ſpake*. After he had delivered the ſermon on the Mount, in the hearing of multitudes, the people were *aſtoniſhed at his doctrine*. Nor were the Jewiſh doctors leſs aſtoniſhed, when they heard his diſcourſes on one occaſion and another. They might well aſk, *How knoweth this man letters?* His doctrine and miracles alike amazed them.

Further: If Jeſus was a mere man, he was of all men the vileſt: For he not only declared that he received his Religion from Heaven, but added, that God was his Father. He aſſumed divine titles and honors; and declared that all men ſhould honor him, even as they honor God, whom he called his Father. This was the height of blaſphemy, if he was not a teacher ſent from God. Now ſuppoſe him ſuch a blaſphemer, was it poſſible he ſhould be the author of ſo admirable an inſtitution? Should exhibit ſo perfect a pattern? Could the vileſt of impoſtors publiſh a Religion moſt honorable to the divine moral perfections, containing the brighteſt diſcoveries of them, placing the eſſence of piety and virtue in a conformity to them? A Religion perfective of human happineſs, ſhewing by his own example, what exaltation our debaſed nature is capable of?

We muſt, therefore, either deny the ſuperior excellence of the Chriſtian ſcheme of morality; or elſe admit that Jeſus was ſent of God. The former the Deiſt doth not deny. They, who believe that Jeſus was the Son of the bleſſed, can give a reaſon why he taught and lived as never man did.

But the Deiſt, on his principles, muſt ſay, that the moſt complete ſyſtem of morality, a ſyſtem replete with love to God, and men, and goodneſs, proceeded from Satan, the avowed enemy of them—that the moſt perfect character was the meſſenger of Satan. Let him reconcile this, or elſe acknowledge with one of his brethren who guarded the crucifixion, *truly this man was the Son of God.*

Whether the moral ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, *in itſelf conſidered,* is or is not a ſufficient proof of the Heavenly original of this Religion, yet when we add, that the author of it, ſeparate from his divine miſſion, was every way incompetent to frame ſuch a ſyſtem, I ſee not but the concluſion is undeniable, that God was with him. Admitting this concluſion, it gives a rational account, and the only rational account, of the tranſcendent excellence of the inſtructions and moral character of Jeſus. This ſuppoſition, and no other, furniſheth us with a ſolution of an acknowledged fact, that a perſon of low parentage and education, deſpiſed and rejected of men, who had not where to lay his head, yet taught "more ſublime truths, and maxims more eſſentially promotive of the good of mankind, than all the writings of" ancient philoſophers, legiſlators and moraliſts could afford; and exemplified them in his own character. If then his inſtitution and character claim high eſteem and reverence, viewing him as a mere man; how much higher eſteem and reverence do they claim if he came from God.

Can "an oppoſer of our Religion lay his hand on his heart, and ſay his deſign is friendly to man-

kind? If he ſhould ſucceed in his endeavors to overthrow it, has he a clearer ſyſtem of theology to propoſe? Better rules of private and ſocial virtue, or higher motives thereto? Has he a more efficacious plan to lay, for promoting the honor of God and good of men? Or can he relieve our ignorance, and point out the deſigns of God to us? Let the writings of modern infidels anſwer theſe queſtions. If then in proportion as one weakens the faith of Chriſtianity, he hurts the intereſts of peace and order, virtue and happineſs, the preſumption is violent that" his "*head*" and "*heart*" are "*wrong*. Men of this turn have reaſon to examine themſelves cloſely; *for truth comes not to deſtroy men, but to ſave.*"

IMPROVEMENT.

From what has been diſcourſed we infer, firſt, that *practical* truths are the moſt important. This appears from the inſtructions of Jeſus, the beſt teacher. Not a ſentence in his excellent ſermon on the Mount but directs us in the matter or manner of our duty to God, or men, or ourſelves—in the rule, the principles, or motives of it. Religion is deſigned to improve the underſtanding and the heart. While it informs the mind with the beſt ſentiments and principles, theſe are a foundation to the beſt temper and conduct. If not improved to this end, they do but aggravate our ſin and ſhame. In vain muſt we plead our knowledge, faith and profeſſion, if we are not followers of Chriſt. He will ſay at the day of accounts, *I ne-*

ver knew you! But they that do his commandments, *have right to the tree of life.*

Hence religious doctrines are important or otherwiſe, according to their practical tendency.

Hence thoſe hopes are groundleſs which men build on the mere obſervance of religious rites. Theſe are to be regarded in ſubſerviency to judgment, mercy and faith. For love to God and men is more than *whole burnt offerings and ſacrifice.* Shall then the power of Religion be poſtponed to the form? Or will any *partial, ſuperficial* and *occaſional* reſpect, even to the moral precepts of Religion, diſtinguiſh us from hypocrites and heathen? What but the obedience of the heart, an unreſerved and perſevering obedience, an obedience founded in Chriſtian motives and proſpects, can do this? The morality our Religion inculcates *is that of the heart, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God.* The deareſt luſt muſt be ſacrificed. We muſt endure in the hour of temptation. Love to God and men, faith unfeigned, or believing unto righteouſneſs, gives the victory over temptations within and without. The faith that doth not work by love, cannot ſave us. Charity is the qualification for Heaven, and will abide for ever. Taking our principles and maxims, our aims and hopes, from the author of Chriſtianity, regardleſs of other ſyſtems and guides, we cannot miſcarry. *Let this mind be in you, which was in Chriſt Jeſus. Whatſoever things are true,—honeſt,—juſt,—pure,—lovely,—of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.*

SERMON XI.

THE FOLLY AND GUILT, OF BEING ASHAMED OF CHRIST.

BY

SAMUEL S. SMITH, D. D.
Col. N. C. V. P. et S. T. P.

MARK viii. 38.

Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and with the holy Angels.

TO perform our duty, and then, without oſtentation to avow it, is our moſt honorable and uſeful character. It is fulfilling the firſt law of our nature, and extending the prevalence of religion and virtue in the world, by the influence of our example. To be *aſhamed* of our duty, is to be aſhamed of our glory. To acknowledge its obligation in ſecret, and yet diſguiſe it before men, diſcovers a weakneſs and duplicity of mind, that is no leſs inconſiſtent with dignity, than with piety.

The ſentiment of *ſhame*, that gives to the opinion of others ſo great authority over the mind, is originally a wiſe and excellent law of nature. But, the depravity of man hath perverted the beſt principles, and changed the moſt ingenuous feelings of the heart, into miniſters of ſin. Great crimes are evidently oppoſed to the intereſts of ſociety, and therefore they are condemned by public opinion.—The depravity of the human heart is equally oppoſed to the ſpirit of true Religion; and therefore, the manners, and at leaſt the oſtenſible opinions of the world, contradict the purity and ſimplicity of the Goſpel. The one oppoſes vice in the extreme, the other tends to encourage vice in a certain degree.

The world hath ſo accommodated its converſation, its wit, and its opinions, to its manners, that men, in the cauſe of piety, are afraid of incurring its cenſure, or contempt. They want courage to oppoſe the ſtream of cuſtom—they renounce their duty in compliance with faſhionable vice, or they conceal their inward reverence for it, and, againſt their conviction, they live like the world.

To be aſhamed of Chriſt, is a ſin that may be conſidered in a variety of lights. Our Saviour, in pronouncing this ſentence, had probably an immediate view to the teſtimony which his diſciples would be called to bear to his name, before the tribunals of their unrighteous judges; where the ſplendor of courts, the ſcoffs of enemies, the ig-

nominy of puniſhments, and the humble and unfriended condition of the firſt Chriſtians, would all contribute to ſubdue their minds, to make them aſhamed of their maſter's croſs, and to deprive them of the courage neceſſary to profeſs, or to ſuffer, for his deſpiſed cauſe.—Honor elevates the mind, and gives fortitude to the weak. Shame is an enfeebling principle, that takes even from the brave, the confidence neceſſary to avow truth, and the firmneſs neceſſary to endure ſuffering.—Indeed, to be *aſhamed* of Chriſt, and to *deny* him, are ſo intimately connected, as cauſe and effect, that St. Matthew, in expreſſing this declaration of our Saviour, ſays, whoſoever ſhall *deny* me before men, him will I alſo *deny* before my Father who is in Heaven.

Through the goodneſs of God, *we* are not expoſed to perſecution; but living in an age in which cuſtom, in which the powers of wit and ridicule, in which the honors of ſociety, and in which even reaſon and philoſophy have been engaged on the ſide of vice, we are liable to diſguiſe the truths of the goſpel, and to be aſhamed of Chriſt, with a more criminal weakneſs than they who ſuffered their conſtancy to be ſhaken by the majeſty of tribunals, and the terror of flames.

It is this evil which I propoſe, from the text, to explain and condemn.

I. By pointing out what is implied in being aſhamed of Chriſt, and of his words.

II. By demonſtrating its folly and its guilt.

I. In pointing out what is implied in being aſhamed of Chriſt, and of his words, I ſhall treat of the *ſentiment* of ſhame directly—and unfold ſome of its principal *cauſes*—and its *conſequences*, as they affect the profeſſion of Religion.

1. In the firſt place, the *ſentiment* of ſhame—This, like other ſimple feelings and emotions of the human mind, cannot be eaſily underſtood, except by exciting the perception, and calling to mind the occaſions on which we have moſt ſenſibly felt its conſtraints.—Let us recollect thoſe ſeaſons in which a ſinful regard to the obſervation of men has tempted us to decline the duty to which we have been urged by our own hearts—or, in which we have gone into criminal compliances with the world, through a weakneſs of mind, that was unable to ſupport the preſence, or to contradict the opinions of our fellow ſinners. Let young perſons, particularly, recollect their fears, leſt it ſhould be known that they worſhip God, and pay to the Creator the firſt duty of a creature.—Recollect what it is that ſometimes clothes you with a light and thoughtleſs air in the houſe of God, afraid to be ſerious, leſt you ſhould appear too much to believe the goſpel, or to be affected by its truths. When, at any time, the divine word begins to ſeize upon your hearts, what is it that excites you to ſhake off the conviction? And, when almoſt perſuaded to be a Chriſtian, what withholds

you from being perſuaded altogether?—It is *ſhame*. You are afraid the world will remark it—the world whoſe preſence weighs more with you than the authority of an inviſible Deity. If you feel the compunctions of repentance, you fear leſt they ſhould be imputed to melancholy, or to weakneſs. If you perceive the duty and importance of making ſalvation your firſt care, and of honoring your Saviour by a public profeſſion of his name, yet, you want the neceſſary reſolution to encounter the world—to meet the ſneers of your companions—their looks of ſuſpicion, their hints of hypocriſy, their preſages of inconſtancy.—Thus may every hearer underſtand this ſentiment by recalling to mind the occaſions on which he has felt it, and on which it has checked his deſires, or deſtroyed his reſolutions of duty.

2. I ſhall further illuſtrate it, by pointing out ſome of its principal *cauſes*. Theſe may be reduced to the three that follow—the pain of ſingularity—the power of ridicule—the want of ſincerity.

Singularity is always painful to an ingenuous mind. It ſeems to hold us out as exceptions from the general law of human nature—as inſenſible to its feelings—and worthy neither of the affections, nor of the confidence of mankind. Singularity always attracts the cenſure of the world; or, by contradicting general practice, or opinions, it invites contempt. The public manners have numbers on their ſide, ſufficient to brand with ignominy

whatever, by differing from them, implies their condemnation. Superſtition, contraction of ſentiment, weakneſs of mind, illiberality of heart, are the mildeſt reproaches that faſhionable diſſipation beſtows on piety that dares to be ſingular. Wealth and power, objects before which the human mind is prone to bow, being too often on the ſide of vicious faſhion, give it great advantage in eſtabliſhing wrong ideas of honor and diſgrace. And becauſe the multitude of men of ſcience, like the vulgar multitude, are frequently on the ſame intereſts, even philoſophy and wit have been preſſed into its ſervice by theſe its obedient ſons. To withſtand ſo many formidable enemies, is an arduous taſk, even for confirmed virtue. Little is the wonder then, if firſt reſolutions in Religion ſhould be ſhaken by them; and if the young ſhould ſometimes not have fortitude to bear up againſt them. To be ſingular in piety, is to dare incur contempt for the deſpiſed croſs. A hard ſacrifice this for human pride! and eſpecially for juvenile virtue!—Many more are found who are ready to forſake the Saviour, than who have firmneſs of mind ſufficient to overcome the conſtraints of a falſe ſhame. Imperious faſhion, both in conduct and opinion, will for ever ſway the worldly heart. To riſe above its influence requires an extraordinary zeal in Religion, that ſeems to annihilate the temptations of the world, or a long and reſpected character in Religion, that gives a man authority over his own actions. But, in the commencement of a religious life, and before a

character in piety hath become appropriated and ſacred, for a man to enter into the ſociety of his companions with reſerve—to go with it only a certain length—to ſeem to enjoy it with conſtraint—to reproach them by more ſevere and corrected morals—and to incur their ſuſpicion, obloquy, or contempt, requires uncommon prudence, and uncommon fortitude.——How often does the diſmaying power of ſhame ſubdue the heart before ſo many difficulties!

Another ſource of falſe ſhame is found in the *power of ridicule*.

Ridicule is, perhaps, the ſevereſt aſſault which a man, about to enter upon duty, is called to ſuſtain. It is apt to diſmay and humble him much more than the coolneſs of contempt, or the violence of power. So ſenſible of its force are ſome infidels, that with this weapon alone do they attack Chriſtianity, which they have ſo long in vain aſſailed by reaſon. It is a ſpecies of attack which every man can uſe againſt Religion, becauſe all can laugh, though few can reaſon. It can be uſed againſt Religion with peculiar ſucceſs, becauſe its perfections are often inviſible to ſenſe, or withdrawn from the view; while the imperfections of its profeſſors, which are miſtaken for it, are obvious to every eye.—The *ſaints!*—the *hypocrites!*—the *weak fools!*—are titles that will furniſh abundant ſources of amuſement to thoſe who miſtake *names* for *characters*, and *laughter* for *wit*: And, when other

matter fails, mimickry, the loweſt ſpecies of ridicule, comes in with a thouſand malicious and falſe additions, to dreſs out the laſt ſcenes of impious diverſion. The wiſe and experienced Chriſtian arrives at length, to feel his ſuperiority over theſe ludicrous attacks—but the young and inexperienced find them almoſt irreſiſtible. They feel the humiliating contempt of laughter—they are degraded in their own eſteem—ridicule diſmays them—a ſenſeleſs ſmile ſubdues their hearts—and before a ſinful generation, they are *aſhamed of Chriſt, and of his words.*

In the conſciouſneſs of *want of ſincerity*, we find another cauſe of that weak ſhame which is prone to deny, or to diſguiſe, our reverence for Religion.

Pretences to an unſupported character are, in the higheſt degree, diſhonorable and reproachful. The world, that differs in ſo many things from the diſciples of Chriſt, agrees with them in condemning *viſible hypocriſy.* Many young perſons, dreading the contempt that is due to this character, are deterred from making a declared choice of Religion. Conſcious that a conduct grave, devout and holy, ſhould accompany the profeſſion of piety, and fearing leſt they want that ſincere and courageous zeal, which will enable them to make ſuch a reſolute and conſpicuous change of life, as becomes the followers of Chriſt, they decline to appear openly for his cauſe; they are afraid of diſcovering for it that reverence and attachment which

they really feel, leſt they ſhould not be able to ſupport the profeſſion with uniformity and conſiſtency.—Ah! my brethren, if our hearts were ſincere, the importance and glory of divine things would at once decide our choice, and overcome the apprehenſions of being ever willing to ſacrifice them to worldly intereſts, or to worldly pleaſures; to the ſolicitations, or the ſneers of men. But inſincerity fears the reproach of hypocriſy, more than it fears hypocriſy itſelf—inſincerity ſhrinks from the opinion of a worm, but does not tremble before the juſtice of the Creator—inſincerity is aſhamed of our glory, in the midſt of ſinners who are forever glorying in their ſhame!

3. The conſideration of the *effects*, as well as the *cauſes* of this principle, will aſſiſt in explaining its nature.

One of the moſt certain conſequences of being aſhamed of duty, is to *lead to boldneſs and audacity in vice*. Shame is, perhaps, the evidence of a middle character, neither virtuous nor abandoned. It is always accompanied with ſome remaining reverence for God. But, judging from the licentious face of the world, that other ſinners are not ſubject to the ſame conſtraints, it bluſhes for this ſentiment, as for a weakneſs. Endeavoring to cover its belief, or its fears, it aſſumes a greater ſhew of infidelity and licenſe than perhaps is real. It ſoon affects to talk in the ſtile of the world—to divert itſelf with ſerious perſons, and at length, with ſerious things—it gives hints of libertiniſm, which

it repreſents as ſuperiority to vulgar prejudice—it ſometimes puſhes theſe appearances farther than would be neceſſary, if men were really infidels, to ſecure to themſelves, without controverſy, that honorable character. But conſcious inſincerity urges them to extremes to cover its own deceptions. And men being prone to form their opinions, no leſs than to derive their feelings, from ſympathy, theſe mutual appearances contribute to create, at length, that vice and infidelity to which all, in the beginning, only pretend. It is, beſides, a principle of human nature, that pretence itſelf, will ultimately form thoſe diſpoſitions and habits, which it continues to affect.

But if ſhame, more *modeſtly* reſolves not to renounce but to *poſtpone* the care of our ſalvation; is there not reaſon to fear, that this unhappy reſolution will eventually come to the ſame iſſue? Need I repeat in this aſſembly the uſual fruits of delay? Ah! my brethren, men always find the ſame reaſons for delaying—and thoſe who, through a falſe ſhame, and fear of the world, poſtpone their duty, may uſually be conſidered, in effect, as *reſolving to renounce it.*

If conſcience, however, or, if other motives prevail with ſome men, who are, nothwithſtanding, under the influence of a criminal *ſhame*, openly to acknowledge their Saviour; will it not, often, corrupt the principles, and pervert the ſpirit of Religion? They ſtudy to accommodate their ſpirit

and principles to the opinions and manners of the world; that the world, ſeeing nothing in their piety but its *own image*, may ceaſe to reproach them. Piety becomes with them prudential maxims of behaviour. The diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the goſpel, the denial of ourſelves, the regeneration of the heart, and ſpirituality of life, are little to be obſerved in perſons, who are afraid of nothing ſo much as of being remarked for religious ſingularity; and who aim no higher than to pay the ſame ceremonious reſpect to the church, which they do to the world. Leſt their piety ſhould be reproached as ſuperſtition, they are careful perhaps, to make it underſtood, that they do not place too high a value on the public inſtitutions of Religion—Leſt it ſhould be derided as enthuſiaſm, do they not baniſh from their devotion, *all appearances of zeal?* Leſt they ſhould incur the imputation of a narrow, or illiberal mind, do they not often run ſo far into the principles and manners of a diſſolute age, that hardly can you diſcern, that they are the *friends of Religion?*

Having thus far conſidered, what is implied in being "aſhamed of Chriſt, and of his words"—I proceed,

II. To ſhew its *folly* and its *guilt*—*Of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed.*

The *folly* and the *guilt* of this vice are reciprocal. They mutually contribute to illuſtrate, and aggravate each other. In this connexion, its *folly* de-

ſerves, in the *firſt place*, to be conſidered with the moſt ſerious attention.——It conſiſts,

1. In being aſhamed of our true glory.

2. In hoping to avoid, by renouncing Religion, an evil which cannot be ſhunned among men, I mean, detraction and ridicule.

3. In fearing an imaginary evil, that is, reproach for real virtue and piety.

4. And, finally, in expoſing ourſelves to infinite danger, for the ſake of covering a fruitleſs deception.

1. It conſiſts, in the firſt place, in being aſhamed of our true glory.

What is the *higheſt glory* of man?—Whether we conſider ourſelves as creatures, as ſinners to be redeemed, or as moral agents, the moſt important lights in which we can be viewed; our glory and our duty are the ſame—Obedience to the Creator, gratitude to the Saviour, and conformity to the laws of our nature.

If God is our parent, and the author of our being, doth not every idea of duty and of honor require us to worſhip him, and publicly to claim our relation to him? On the worthy and obedient child, the virtues of the parent are reflected, and every related object derives a ſplendor from the dignity of the principal. But examine all the things on earth, that are the ſubjects of human

boaſting, and are they not in his preſence, *leſs than nothing and vanity?*—O God! the univerſal Father!—Origin of Being!—Fountain of good!—in union to thee—in conformity to thine image—in obedience to thy will, conſiſts the glory of the rational and moral nature! To be aſhamed of thee, is not the abſurdity only, but the madneſs of human folly!

Gratitude to the Saviour, is the ſecond duty, and the ſecond honor of man. To ſhew a defect of gratitude where it is juſtly due, is a deciſive proof of a degenerate and ignoble mind. But the greatneſs and condeſcenſion of the Redeemer—the meanneſs and the guilt of man, concur, in this caſe, to impoſe a boundleſs claim on our gratitude and love. Is it not our true glory, my brethren, to feel, with all their force, the infinite obligations created by redemption?—Is it not our glory, to acknowledge them with warmer gratitude, in proportion, as they are forgotten, or neglected by the world?—Yes, this is the dictate of a true, a generous, a grateful, as well as pious heart.

Laſtly, the honor of man conſiſts in *fulfilling the end of our being*, which is the will of God. But this *weak principle*, which makes him defert his duty, changes, at the ſame time, and degrades his rational and moral nature, and ſinks them from their original and native glory; the one, to a reſemblance of brutal natures, the other, to an image of infernal ſprits.—O man! ambitious of glory!

afraid of nothing ſo much as of diſgrace! Unwiſe and fooliſh man! thou art aſhamed of thy glory! and thou glorieſt in thy ſhame!

2. The *folly* of being aſhamed of our duty, appears, in the next place, in vainly hoping to avoid, by renouncing Religion, an evil, which cannot be ſhunned among men; I mean, detraction and ridicule.

What is the world but a vaſt theatre, where envy and malice are perpetually ſharpening the tongues and the wit of men againſt each other? What is half the intercourſe of life but a ſcene of obloquy and ſneer, where the characters of the abſent are the conſtant ſacrifice to the vanity of the preſent? Wherever you have rivals, and that is, wherever you have acquaintance of the ſame ſex, or age, or profeſſion with yourſelf, you find thoſe whoſe weak minds have no other means of exalting themſelves but by depreſſing you. Change then your life—you only change the ſubject of diſcourſe. You cannot gain, by continuing of the party of ſinners, what you fear to loſe, by embracing the cauſe of Religion—their friendſhip or their good opinion. And why ſhould you fear, in the ſervice of God alone, an evil to which you muſt be equally, or even more expoſed, by remaining in the intereſts of the world?—I ſay more expoſed; for it greatly augments the folly of this ſin.

3. In the next place; that while it incurs *a real*, it flies from *an imaginary evil*. It fears reproach

for Religion, when, in reality, *the world has no reproach to make;* when, inſtead of deſpiſing, *it reſpects the beautiful and ſupported character of piety.*

Wiſdom and goodneſs, rightly underſtood, can never be the objects of ridicule or cenſure. They vindicate themſelves to the judgment and conſcience, even of the vicious. Miſrepreſentation, to which an honeſt mind ſhould ever be ſuperior, is here the only ground of reproach. And what can even miſrepreſentation alledge?—That, in youth, it is an affectation of wiſdom and virtue, above your companions and above your years?—Alas! can any age be too early to be wiſe, and to ſeek for real and durable felicity?—If the multitude of your companions afford few examples of piety, is it not the greater honor to riſe to a degree of wiſdom, rarely attained even in mature life, and at an age in which we think it much if you learn with docility, to be able already to give an example worthy of imitation?—Will the world buſy itſelf to find out falſe motives for your change? Let ſuch malice ſerve only to diſguſt you the more with a world, the true character of which, you are now juſt beginning to diſcern.—Will they ſay with a ſneer, *the ſaints! the hypocrites! the weak fools! Ah! this zeal will not laſt long!*—Let ſuch ungenerous inſults only determine your reſolution, more firmly to ſupport the dignity of Religion, by the integrity of your conduct, and by perſeverance in virtue. If you do thus, be aſſured that the world itſelf, after proving your ſincerity, and ſpending

its firſt reſentments upon you, for having forſaken its party, will regard you with reverence and eſteem. It is not indeed Religion, but inſincerity and hypocriſy they deſpiſe. If then you would ſilence obloquy, and obtain an honorable place in their hearts, be not aſhamed of the doctrines of Chriſt. But you muſt be careful to mix with your Religion, nothing weak or ſuperſtitious;—nothing libertine or worldly—Do not reſemble too much the man of the world—*It is their own image which they deſpiſe in a Chriſtian.* *Perſevere* in the path of duty. They will convert contempt or hatred into veneration--they will applaud your reſolution—they will envy your deſtiny—and if they cannot bring their lives to reſemble you, they will *ſecretly ſigh*, that their end may be like yours.

4. The folly of this evil conſiſts, in the laſt place, in its expoſing us to *infinite danger*, for the ſake of covering *a fruitleſs deception.*

Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, ſaid the Saviour, *of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed.*—Wo to that man, of whom the Son ſhall be aſhamed! God, when offended, might be reconciled through his atonement. But, when the Saviour is rejected, *there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins.*

Is this the iſſue of being aſhamed of the goſpel?—Is this the reward of that frivolous honour which we would preſerve in the opinion of a corrupted world, by renouncing virtue?—Is this the

fruit of that criminal deception which we ſtrive to maintain, by unworthy pretences againſt the ſtruggling ſenſe of inward duty?—do we derive from it even preſent gain, to make a momentary compenſation, for the *eternal loſs*?—No, *worldly* reputation and intereſt are, when rightly conſidered, *in favour of Religion*. But when the *ſoul*—when the *hopes of ſalvation*—when the *judgment of God*, are put in the balance againſt a *ſlander*, a *ſneer*, a *ſuſpicion*, a *look* of miſerable mortals, and outweighed—Oh! infinite folly! My brethren, eternity alone can diſcloſe it in its full magnitude; when we ſhall ſee, in the dreadful light of everlaſting burnings, the vanity of human opinion, and all the terrors of that denunciation, *of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed*.

Secondly, having endeavored, in few words, to illuſtrate *the folly* of being aſhamed of Religion, I ſhall, with equal brevity, illuſtrate *its guilt*. Its guilt conſiſts in exalting the authority of man above the glory of God—in ingratitude to him, who was not aſhamed of us—and in promoting vice by the pernicious influence of our example.

1. In exalting the authority of man above the glory of God.

His *infinite perfection*, independently on his rights as our Creator, has a ſupreme claim to our adoration and love. He is infinitely *more worthy* than any of his creatures, of the fervent and entire devotion of our hearts. He who hath created the powers of underſtanding and enjoyment, is able to

fill them with conſummate and eternal conſola tions. Not to love him, therefore—not to make his glory predominant over all other objects, is an evidence that the heart is blind to moral beauty, and corrupted in all its affections. But, to make man the arbiter of our duty to God—to make the divine glory ſtoop to the pleaſure, or opinion of a miſerable worm, is a crime beyond expreſſion. Its malignity is to be eſtimated, from the perfection of him who is offended; and, like that, it is infinite.

2. The guilt of this ſin conſiſts, in the next place, in ingratitude to him who was not aſhamed of us.

Ingratitude to a benefactor is among the moſt deteſted vices. If the ingratitude of men, for the bleſſings of ſalvation, ſtrikes us with leſs horror, than other examples of this ſin, it is becauſe *we* are involved in the common crime—it is becauſe we do not diſcern in the light of faith, the infinite diſtance between the Creator and the creature.—But when he deſcends from his eternal throne—when the incarnate deity ſubmits to ſuffer—when the divine glory was not aſhamed of human weakneſs, that ſinners ſhould be aſhamed of him—be aſtoniſhed O Heavens, at this! And tremble thou Earth, who beareſt in thy boſom ſuch guilt!

It has ſometimes been aſked, by thoſe who are not willing to make great ſacrifices, whether we may not acquit ourſelves of duty in ſecret, with-

out expoſing our profeſſion to the view of thoſe who would *inſult or deride it?*—I anſwer, no.—Sincerity glories in its object: And when God is the object, the ſoul, occupied in the bleſſedneſs of its portion, forgets, in a meaſure, the applauſe or cenſure of the world—his glory will be a ſufficient portion when the world frowns—the ſenſe of his love will ſupport the heart againſt the fear of its reproach. *Shame* to that worldly prudence that is aſhamed of its God!

Shall ſin, the diſgrace of our nature, walk among us with elevated and impudent forehead?—And ſhall Religion, the glory of the reaſonable ſoul, bluſh and retire, leſt the profane eyes of men, dazzled with its beauty, ſhould not be able to endure the ſight.

3. Its guilt conſiſts, in the laſt place, in promoting vice, by the pernicious influence of our example.

Example is contagious—and the world becomes more corrupted, from the vice that is already in it. To decline the profeſſion of Religion through falſe ſhame, is, in ſome reſpects, more injurious to the intereſts of virtue in the world, than open impiety. This, ſometimes, prevents imitation, by a certain horror at its enormity.—That, by preſerving greater decency, more effectually inſinuates its poiſon. Your example proclaims your unbelief, or your contempt of the goſpel; and invites others to receive it with incredulity, or to

treat it with ſcorn. In account of the divine juſtice, *the depravity and perhaps the perdition of many ſinners*, ſhall be charged to that criminal ſhame, which alienates you from the life of God, *and ſhall go to augment your guilt*.

In the *concluſion* of this diſcourſe, permit me to remark, that although divine grace alone can effectually ſecure the heart, and raiſe it above the influence of a falſe and unholy ſhame; yet it will greatly contribute to this happy effect, to have early eſtabliſhed juſt ideas of honor and ſhame, by a well directed education. It is of great importance, in the beginning of life, to pre-occupy the mind by good impreſſions—to teach it to reverence God, before it has yet ſeen the beauties of holineſs—*to honor*, before it has learned to *love* religion—and to prepare it to *deſpiſe*, before it has arrived *to deteſt* the vices and the follies of the world. It is of the greater importance, becauſe our habits and opinions are conſtantly and imperceptibly forming, by all that we ſee and hear. If Religion does not early impart ſuch as are rational and juſt, the world will neceſſarily prepoſſeſs the mind with ſuch as are pernicious and falſe. Falſe ſhame will withhold it from the influence of piety—falſe honor will raiſe up within it the moſt dangerous enemies to ſalvation.

Let parents and inſtructors, therefore, be diligent to diſcharge their duty with fidelity to the riſing generation. The moſt happy fruits will reward your prudent and honeſt zeal. Reflect what

advantages you enjoy, when you plead the cauſe of piety againſt vice—and of Heaven againſt the world. What can be more glorious than the ſervice of the King of Kings? What more great and worthy than virtue, which brings to perfection all the beſt and nobleſt principles of human nature? Religion is the true glory as well as happineſs of man. It is ſin only that is his real ſhame.—It is filled, beſides, with unſpeakable danger, and is ſpeedily tending to eternal ruin.

Suffer me to extend a little this idea.—It is ſtrongly implied in the expreſſion of our Saviour, *of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* All miſeries are included in this threatning.—When God condeſcends to treat the ſinner in this language of ſarcaſtic contempt, it ſtrikes me as the moſt fearful denunciation of divine vengeance. Other threatnings ſeem more definitely to mark their penalties: This preſents nothing diſtinctly to the imagination, but holds up every thing moſt terrible to our fears.—Shall I call up to view the laſt tribunal? The Heavens on fire? The Earth ſhaken, and moved out of its place? The elements melting with fervent heat before the wrath of God and of the Lamb?—Shall I ſpeak of *Tophet* that *is ordained of old, the pile whereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord as a ſtream of brimſtone, doth kindle it?* And ſhall I not ſay, after all, that his moſt fearful ſentence is, "*of him ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed?*"—This is indignant juſ-

tice, heightened by contempt. The flames of anger may conſume the ſinner—ſhame will bury him for ever from his ſight.—What! baniſhed from thy ſight, O merciful Saviour of men! This is indeed the blackneſs of everlaſting darkneſs!

Let thoſe unhappy men who are aſhamed of Chriſt, and of his words, deeply reflect on this dreadful deſtiny!—To perſuade you to this wiſe and neceſſary reſolution, is the whole object of the preſent diſcourſe. May the Spirit of God add to theſe reflections his own evidence, and his almighty energy! May he impart to us a wiſe eſtimate of eternity and time! Of the opinions of men, and the approbation of God!—And now to the King eternal, immortal, and inviſible, be rendered, through Jeſus Chriſt, all honor, glory, and praiſe, from all on Earth, and all in Heaven! Amen!

SERMON XII.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

BY

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MATT. vi. 14.

If ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you.

THE forgiveneſs of injuries, which is among the moſt important duties of morals, and to which mankind have always ſubmitted with ſo much reluctance, is here enforced by our Saviour with the higheſt ſanction of Religion. In inculcating this great law, he propoſes the mercy of God to our imitation, he recalls to memory our offences againſt him, that this humiliating reflexion may render us mild and indulgent to thoſe who have offended us—And he touches the deepeſt ſprings of intereſt, by making our own pardon from God depend on the ſpirit with which we treat others.

Philoſophy has often recommended the contempt, but rarely the forgiveneſs of injuries. It

is a doctrine not, indeed, above the reach of reaſon; but reaſon is too weak to eſtabliſh it as a general principle of action. It required the authority of a Divine Legiſlator to enforce the duty, in this extent, on the pride, or the meanneſs of mankind.

To illuſtrate this duty is the object of the following diſcourſe.—With this view, I propoſe to explain its nature and extent—and to ſhew that it is founded in the juſteſt reaſon.

I. I beg your attention, therefore, in the firſt place, while I endeavor to illuſtrate the nature and extent of this duty.

The firſt impulſe, uſually, which men feel on receiving an injury, is to revenge. This dark and furious paſſion is always violent and extreme in its purpoſes, and is prone to juſtify its exceſſes by repreſenting its object in a criminal and odious light. It outrages the divine ſpirit of charity, and tends to rend aſunder thoſe amiable and happy ties, by which God would unite ſociety together, and connect man with man. To prevent, or to correct theſe diſorders, Chriſtianity hath promulged the law of forgiveneſs. This law comprehends the following great principles of duty—to love our enemies—and to return good for evil.

1. To love our enemies.—No injury can cancel that original obligation that lies on all mankind to love one another. Derived from one origin—partaking of one nature—united in the ſame intereſts—and heirs of the ſame hopes, they are connected

by ſo many, and ſuch powerful ties, that no cauſe can be ſufficient entirely to diſſolve them, or to juſtify an unforgiving temper. If every man ſhould conceive himſelf intitled to repay injuſtice with hatred, would not that amiable ſpirit be deſtroyed which was intended to unite the world together, and the family of God be rent with irreconcilable diſſentions? Hence, he requires us to love even our enemies—to regard them as brethren—to ſympathize with their diſtreſs—to find apologies for their raſh and miſtaken reſentments—and to pity thoſe whoſe injuries are more pernicious to themſelves than to us.

This ſpirit, when it is ſincere, will not be reſtrained to thoſe emotions and wiſhes of a good and benevolent heart, that are confined within itſelf. It will ſeek every prudent and practicable mean of reconciliation. It is the law of Chriſt---*if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath aught againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*---A good and delicate mind will feel exquiſite pain in having given even involuntary offence. If innocent, it will be ſolicitous to make thoſe explanations that may be neceſſary to remove improper prejudices from a brother's breaſt. Or, if through prepoſſeſſion, or the tranſports of paſſion, it hath given him real cauſe of umbrage, it will not be too haughty to make the juſt and reaſonable conceſſions. Nay, where the heart of a brother is to be regained, a

good man will not too rigorouſly examine or contend for his own rights---he will diſplay a certain generoſity in his advances, which is the dictate of a benevolent and noble mind, conſcious of the pureſt intentions.

2. To forgive injuries, is not only *to love our enemies*, but, *to return good for evil.*—*Bleſs thoſe who curſe you*, ſaith Chriſt, *do good to thoſe who hate you, and pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you. If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirſt give him drink; for, in ſo doing, thou wilt heap coals of fire on his head*—that is, thou wilt either reclaim him by the painful conviction of his raſhneſs and guilt; or thou wilt diſſolve his heart, if he hath yet a heart to be diſſolved, by the warm perſuaſion of your goodneſs. If there be a way in which you can render him eſſential ſervice—by ſpeaking well of the deſerving parts of his character—by drawing a diſcreet veil over his foibles—by generouſly producing his virtues to light—or by advancing his fortunes, you will not only fulfil an elevated duty of Religion, but probably attach him for ever as an uſeful friend.

It may be demanded, perhaps, whether this doctrine of love to our enemies, requires ſuch reliance on their virtue, and ſuch confidence in the appearances of reconciliation as might put us too much in their power if they were deſigning and inſincere.—By no means—Piety is not inconſiſtent with prudence, nor the moſt warm and generous charity with thoſe precautions that are neceſſary

for our ſafety. You may pity, you may aſſiſt, you may forgive, you may love an enemy before you confide in him. Experience is neceſſary to lay a juſt and ſolid foundation for truſt. Your own duty is certain and clear—his character may ſtill be dubious. It requires time and variety of proof to aſſure us ſufficiently of the integrity and goodneſs of others. A heart, prompted by warm benevolence, and, at the ſame time, under the direction of a ſound underſtanding, will be, on this ſubject, the beſt interpreter of the divine law.

It may ſerve, however, farther to illuſtrate the nature and extent of this duty, to point out the falſe principles on which the reconciliations of men often turn after they have been once embroiled, and the falſe ſubſtitutions that are often made in the room of the forgiveneſs of injuries.

Falſe principles of reconciliation are numerous and various. We ſee it ſometimes accompliſhed with difficulty by the aſſiduity and management of common friends, who are offended at the exceſſes to which it is carried, or afflicted at the derangement it occaſions in the circle of their ſociety. The parties, perhaps, fatigued with their importunity, or aſhamed of their own obſtinacy, yield at length to their remonſtrances.—But, obſerve with what reluctance they come together! what mutual coldneſs and diſtruſt they diſcover! how many punctilios muſt be adjuſted! how many explanations muſt be made! how many compromiſes muſt be attempted, evidently calculated to ſave a

falſe idea of honor, and to evade the genuine ſpirit of evangelical reconciliation! Sometimes it is ſought merely as a cover from the perpetual ſhafts of obloquy, or to avoid the anxiety and diſgrace of eternal ſelf-vindication and recrimination.—Sometimes to ſave ourſelves the irkſomeneſs of ſhunning, or the awkwardneſs of meeting in the ſame companies. How often in the numerous and capricious changes of party of every kind, does an unexpected coincidence of intereſt reunite men whom an accidental oppoſition had divided? How often hath the diſhonor of becoming the ſubjects of public ſatire or mirth induced them to overcome or reſtrain their paſſions? And a few, perhaps, affecting the glory of moderation, or of magnanimity, have endeavored not ſo much to forgive as to ſhew a ſuperiority to injuries.

Theſe principles contribute to preſerve a certain degree of order and union in human ſociety; but they do not riſe to that elevation and purity which is required by the goſpel. They are imitations of Religion, not its genuine ſpirit—and although they may be employed as uſeful auxiliaries of piety, yet, if they are the ſole principles of action, their value is deſtroyed by the ſelfiſhneſs and pride with which they are accompanied. You widely miſtake if, in conſequence of a reconciliation that has proceeded upon theſe grounds, you imagine you have forgiven your brother, or have fulfilled the views of the law. The world that judges with more impartiality, ſees you are not

friends. It ſees in your converſation, in your conduct, in your whole manner, a ſecret coldneſs and alienation from him that is not conſiſtent with the meekneſs, the benevolence, and the diſintereſted ſpirit of this duty.—You ſhould forgive for no oblique or ſelfiſh views—you ſhould forgive from the principle of charity—you ſhould forgive for the love of God—you ſhould forgive becauſe you need to be forgiven.

I ſhall now illuſtrate this duty farther, by conſidering, in another view, the falſe ſubſtitutions that are often made in the room of the forgiveneſs of injuries.

The firſt that I mention, is a certain apathy of mind that hath ceaſed to feel the emotions of reſentment, not becauſe the injury is forgiven, but becauſe time has abated our ſenſibility. My brethren, this partakes nothing of the vivacity of true charity. Charity is a warm and active principle. It embraces a forgiven enemy like a reconciled brother—and an enemy who refuſes to be reconciled, it regards with that ſpirit of meekneſs and benediction which can flow only from a heart touched and animated with the love of God.

Another ſubſtitute is a reconciliation merely oſtenſible; and a return to the exterior decencies of ſociety, while a warm remembrance of the injury is ſtill cheriſhed in the breaſt.

It is not uncommon to ſay, I forgive him, but he has no reaſon hereafter to *rely* upon my friend-

ſhip. My brethren, this hint is too inſignificant. We diſcern in it the evident ſymptoms of an alienated mind. Is this to forgive? Does love thus ſtudiouſly cheriſh the memory of an offence? Does the meek temper of forgiveneſs thus ſwell the heart with a proud reſentment? True forgiveneſs implies much more than a conſtrained and artificial ſubmiſſion to the exterior decencies of life. It is a principle that unites the hearts of men by the inward and powerful cement of divine love, and not their perſons merely by the looſe and vulgar ties of ordinary aſſociation.

Another, and much more unjuſtifiable ſubſtitute for this duty, is a reſolution, indeed, not to proſecute an open and public revenge, but accompanied at the ſame time, with a purpoſe to avoid, towards the offender, all the common civilities of life.

Men who act on this principle ſeldom mollify their reſentments ſo far as to ſubmit to a formal reconciliation. Yet becauſe an unforgiving temper is condemned by Religion, and ſtill more, becauſe it is odious to the world, they profeſs to forgive, when they mean only they will not proſecute their rage to extremes. But they refuſe to ſee their enemy—they ſhun the companies he is known to frequent. Wherefore? Becauſe his preſence might excite painful recollections, or create an embarraſſment that would deſtroy the pleaſure of ſociety. My brethren, let the common ſenſe of mankind decide upon this queſtion. Can we have

forgiven our brother if we exclude him from our ſight? If his preſence ſtill irritates? If it recalls ideas that ſhould be forgotten? If it awakens emotions that ſhould be compoſed by the ſpirit of love?—Certainly not.

The laſt ſubſtitute which I ſhall mention for the *forgiveneſs*, is the *contempt* of injuries.

A man is ſo cloſely connected with his actions, that it is difficult to deſpiſe his vices, which is permitted by Religion, without deſpiſing his perſon, which is not permitted. The ſentiment of ſuperiority to an unworthy act too eaſily degenerates, in a common mind, into improper pride. And ſo foreign from true charity is all pride and haughtineſs of ſpirit, and ſo difficult is it not to involve the perſon in our idea with his character or cauſe, that it is ſafeſt, perhaps, for a Chriſtian to regard even the vices of others with pity, rather than with contempt.

Having, thus far, endeavored to explain the nature and extent of forgiving injuries, and pointed out the wrong conceptions which are entertained of it by mankind, both in the improper principles of their reconciliations, and in the falſe ſubſtitutions which they are prone to make in the room of this duty.—I proceed now,

II. To illuſtrate its foundation in reaſon, as well as in the command of the Saviour.

This may be done from a double ſource of argument—from the excellence and amiableneſs of

the diſpoſition from which this virtue is derived—and from the inſufficiency of the cauſes on which revenge is juſtified.

1. In the firſt place, from the excellence and amiableneſs of the diſpoſition from which this virtue is derived.—It contains a high and general philanthropy, which is a ſweet and elevated affection—it contains the love of our enemies, which is a generous principle—it will attract reſpect and honor from the world—and finally, it is the moſt perfect reſemblance of that attribute in the Deity which is the moſt intereſting to man.

1. It contains a high and general philanthropy which is a ſweet and elevated affection.

Love is the higheſt principle of union among all ſenſible beings. Its exerciſe is always accompanied with pleaſure, and with the conſciouſneſs of its excellence. The common proverb that revenge is ſweet, is a maxim of paſſion, not of reaſon. And, like moſt other ſtrong and ſudden dictates of the paſſions, it is falſe. Are not the plans of revenge filled with anxiety and pain? Is not their execution accompanied with the bitterneſs of undiſguiſed rage, or the baſeneſs of ſecret treachery? Doth it not, when moſt ſucceſsful, recoil in its effects, upon ourſelves, either from the reſentment of the world, or from the reflections of our own breaſts? And doth it not, when unſucceſsful, render us the victims of our own impetuoſity, and pride, and involve us in a ſucceſſion of hoſtilities, and a

tempeſt of hateful paſſions, that deſtroy, at once, our ſecurity and our peace?—No, revenge is not ſweet—it embitters our enjoyments—it incurs the hatred and oppoſition of mankind—and, even in our own view, degrades us in the moments of calm recollection. On the other hand, the mild and heavenly principle of univerſal love, exalts us in our own eſteem—It diffuſes a divine ſweetneſs through the breaſt, and ſpreads tranquillity over the whole ſcene of life—it eſcapes injury by avoiding offence—and tends to render all men our friends, by being ourſelves the friends of all. Such is the genuine principle of forgiveneſs—ſuch is its dignity and happineſs—and the reaſonableneſs of the duty becomes evident, from the excellence of its ſource.

2. It contains, in the next place, the love of our enemies, which is a noble and generous affection.

Whatever excellence or beauty there is in that general philanthrophy that unites us to mankind, it is greatly increaſed by embracing our enemies. There is a generoſity in forgiving an enemy that exalts the action. There is a heroiſm in being ſuperior to injury, that cannot be acquired by the boldeſt and moſt ſucceſsful efforts of revenge.—What is an enemy?—One who has treated you with injuſtice—who has attacked your intereſts—who has attempted to blaſt your reputation—who has touched you in thoſe points that are moſt tender and dear to an honeſt and feeling mind.—

What can be more great and elevated than that divine charity which enables us to forgive him? Doth it not diſplay a fortitude that diſdains to fear? or a conſciouſneſs of innocence that cannot, eventually, diſtruſt the juſtice of the world?—Or, is it not, at leaſt, the fruit of penitent humility that forgets *his* injury in the ſelf-reproaches which returning virtue always makes to our *own* paſt folly?—Reproaches which are the certain indications of a worthy and ingenious mind.

But, apart from theſe conſiderations, our enemies themſelves have ſome claim to our regard, for the benefits we may derive from them. Friends are too tender to our foibles. Flatterers, while they ſoothe, beguile, and often do us an eſſential injury, by cheriſhing a falſe vanity, and a contemptuous indifference to the opinion of the world. Frequently, our imperfections are firſt learned from our enemies. And although they may be magnified by unfriendly paſſions; yet even malevolence has uſually ſome ground on which it raiſes its exaggerated pictures. A wiſe man, by prudently attending to its cenſures, may learn to correct his errors, and to perfect his virtues. And the laudable deſire of reforming every fault, and a generous wiſh of perfecting the character may contribute, in ſuch a mind, to extinguiſh reſentment, by the obligation which it feels, even to an enemy.

3. This ſpirit, in the next place, is not only honorable in itſelf, but it will attract reſpect and honor from the world.

No, reply the paſſionate advocates for the manners of the world, ſuch mildneſs and forbearance will only invite injuries, and will certainly degrade us in the public opinion. It is contrary to the eſtabliſhed maxims of honor; and a man is no longer well received if he has forfeited his character in ſo delicate a point. My brethren, let me beg your patience a moment, while I combat the truth of theſe remarks; at leaſt ſo far as they regard a good man, who has acquired an eſtabliſhed character for piety and prudence, who is cautious of giving offence, and who is ready to acknowledge his fault, if he has inadvertently ſuffered himſelf to be betrayed by his paſſion. We rarely ſee examples of that innate and inveterate malice which will purſue benevolent worth of this kind, with unrelenting injuſtice. The vicious world itſelf reſpects goodneſs that is ſupported with dignity. If there are a few inſtances of ſuch atrocious ſpirits, their own violence diſgraces themſelves, and ſaves the reputation of a worthy character. Even in that point, in which modern manners have peculiarly placed the idea of honor, more real glory, and more public eſteem will follow from forgiving than revenging affronts. That affectation of meekneſs, indeed, which flows from puſillanimity, is a contemptible character.—It is eaſily diſtinguiſhable from the mild and benevolent temper of the goſpel which *may* be aſſociated with the higheſt bravery. And much of the reproach which has been poured upon thoſe who,

in the ſtile of the world, have not *properly reſented injuries*, has ariſen from their own weak and unequal conduct. Raſh enough, perhaps, to give unneceſſary offence, they are not believed when they plead principle, for refuſing to make the cuſtomary ſatisfaction. A good man ſhould be uniform throughout. He ſhould be equally inoffenſive in his conduct, as he is careful not to violate the law that forbids retaliation and violence.—There is a mild way of doing every thing—even of oppoſing the world. And when ſteady virtue is ſupported by a calm and placid conduct—when equal pains have been taken to avoid offering an offence, as there is reluctance ſhewn to anſwer for it—when readineſs is ſhewn to acknowledge and correct every inadvertent tranſport of the paſſions--and when, on other occaſions, permitted and approved by religion, a proper firmneſs of mind has been diſcovered, no degradation can reſult from refuſing to comply with the common but falſe maxims of honour.—It was an excellent reply made by a brave and virtuous officer, to one who had challenged him to ſingle combat—"You know I am not afraid to die, but I am afraid to commit a fault. If you wiſh to bring our perſonal courage to the proof, I challenge you to ſhew, in the next battle, which of us ſhall lead our troops with the greateſt bravery to the charge."—Many weak minds are capable of putting their lives to hazard in a ſudden impulſe of rage; but it requires much higher fortitude to encounter great and real

dangers with coolneſs at the call of duty, and to diſplay a ſhining virtue in the ſervice of our country or of mankind.

The maxims of revenge have been formed, if I may ſpeak ſo, by the populace of the world. And whatever comes from that ſchool, is always marked by its native characters of ignorance and weakneſs. Is not this remark verified by obſervation? Where are thoſe doughty combats for honor found? Are they not uſually among thoſe who have little other claim to merit? who, having forfeited the real honor of wiſe and good men, are the more furious for the name? Are they not, moſt frequently, at the termination of thoſe bacchanalian debauches where men have given up, not only the honor, but almoſt the character of human nature? Are they not, at beſt, in thoſe moments of blind and intemperate paſſion, when man is no longer rational?

Theſe are not merely profeſſional declaimings, or the narrow reflexions of a religious ſpirit unacquainted with the manners of the world. If the celeſtial purity of the goſpel—if the divine majeſty of truth can receive ſupport from earth, they will find it in the opinions of the wiſeſt philoſophers, and the braveſt men of antiquity. The elder Cato had it for a maxim, "that we ought to pardon the faults of every other man, but never our own." "Revenge, ſays Plato, although approved by the world, is never proper; nor can any injury

juſtify retaliation." Seneca declares, that "Revenge is inhuman, however it be authorized by a pernicious cuſtom." On the other hand, ſays he, "how amiable is it when a man is incapable of being penetrated by any weapon, or of being hurt by injury or reproach!"—When Dion, that celebrated general and philoſopher, had conquered Syracuſe, two of his moſt inveterate enemies fell into his power. His friends perſuaded him to take vengeance on them. But mark the wife and magnanimous reply of a great ſoldier—"other generals delight in war and arms alone; but I, who have employed ſo much time in the purſuits of ſcience, have ſtudied, by its aids, to overcome anger, revenge, envy, obſtinacy, and other pernicious paſſions of this kind. The ſureſt proof of my ſucceſs is, not only kindneſs to my friends, but lenity and forgiveneſs towards my unjuſt and inveterate enemies." Cleomenes, king of Sparta, once ſaid, "It is the office of a good prince to confer favors on his friends, and to inflict puniſhments on his enemies." "How much better would it be," replied Socrates, who heard him, "to do good to your friends, and to make friends of your enemies?" And no principle of conduct can be more wiſe and noble than that ſuggeſted by Diogenes, to a man who enquired how he might beſt be revenged on his enemy?—The philoſopher anſwered, "By being better than he."—I could fill the time of a long diſcourſe, with quotations to the ſame purpoſe. And it muſt afford a good man pleaſure,

in reading the works of antiquity, to obſerve the conduct of the greateſt men refuting the falſe maxims of modern honor, and to ſee the concluſions of reaſon, aided by philoſophy alone, coinciding with the mild and beneficent precepts of the goſpel. Although it may be beyond our ſphere to emulate theſe illuſtrious men in the fame of their writings, or the glory of their atchievements, is it not however the duty of every Chriſtian to emulate them in the admirable ſpirit of their morals? If nature could guide them by her feeble lights to this high degree of excellence, to what perfection may we arrive, if we faithfully follow the clearer lights of the Sun of Righteouſneſs.

4. In the laſt place, the reaſonableneſs of this duty is illuſtrated from its reſemblance to that beneficent attribute in God that is moſt intereſting to man.

All our offences againſt Heaven are freely forgiven us through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus. When God aſſumed a viſible form, it was to promulge the law of forgiveneſs and love—It was to give the moſt affecting example of it, by offering his life to obtain the pardon of thoſe who had offended him. My brethren! *if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.* Behold him dying for his enemies, and while they are perpetrating the moſt cruel of all injuries, hear him, with infinite dignity and goodneſs, pronounce their forgiveneſs, and even make the apology of their

crime—*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!* Intereſting example to us, whoſe ſins were obliterated by that act!—who were reſcued by it from the flames which our offences againſt him were, at that moment, kindling around us! With what force does it recommend to you from the croſs, that divine precept, to *love your enemies, to bleſs thoſe who curſe you*, to *do good to thoſe who hate you*, and to *pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall on the juſt and the unjuſt.* The Apoſtle beautifully applies it to this uſe in his epiſtle to the Epheſians—*be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* Can any character be more honorable to human nature than to reſemble the perfection of God? Can any duty be more juſt than to forgive as we have been forgiven.

So many principles concur to recommend and urge this amiable exerciſe of Chriſtian charity. The reaſonableneſs of this duty appears, however, not only from the excellence and amiableneſs of the diſpoſitions from which it is derived—but

II. From the inſufficiency of the cauſes on which revenge is juſtified. Theſe may be ranked under the following claſſes—contradiction to our habits and opinions—oppoſition to our pleaſures or intereſts—and injuſtice to our character and reputation.

1. Contradiction to our habits and opinions, in the firſt place, is apt to create an alienation of mind from thoſe who oppoſe us, and to nouriſh the reſentful paſſions.

What implacable oppoſitions have we ſeen grow up among men from diverſity of ſentiment in Religion, or in civil policy? Society, that was deſigned for the protection and peace of mankind, ſeems frequently to inflame the paſſions with greater ardor, by bringing them nearer together. And men, in the extravagance of miſguided zeal in Religion, have thought to promote the cauſe of love and mercy, by the moſt frightful exceſſes of cruelty and rage.—Even on leſs important ſubjects, variety of opinion, and diverſity in the habits of taſte and education, become ſources of mutual alienation and contempt, that create many imaginary cauſes of diſſention, and augment and imbitter thoſe that are real. What ridicule, what ſneer, what obloquy enter into different parties, and often form the ſpirit of the different circles into which ſociety is divided? Do not theſe cauſes nouriſh the paſſions of hatred and pride? Do they not repreſent the actions and deſigns of men in a falſe and injurious light? Do they not contribute to render their diſſentions unforgiving and eternal? Ah! my brethren, are not all theſe occaſions of mutual alienation, when ſeriouſly and calmly eſtimated, unworthy and unreaſonable? And yet, do we not ſee them every day violating, in the groſſeſt manner, the ſpirit and the law of charity?

2. Another cauſe of revenge as little juſtifiable, is oppoſition to our pleaſures, or our intereſts.

Intereſt and pleaſure form thoſe objects of purſuit that uſually occupy the minds of men with the greateſt ardor. If theſe are frequently and pointedly oppoſed, they are apt to create ſtrong and laſting reſentments. How can I love the man, you ſay, who, on all occaſions, ſets himſelf againſt me? How can I forgive the malice that is perpetually thwarting my purpoſes and defeating my views?—Let us examine the validity of theſe reaſons.—Perhaps the malice you impute to him is only the coloring which your reſentment gives to his ſucceſsful rivalſhip. He is engaged in a purſuit of pleaſures, or intereſts ſimilar to your own. Your common views happen to terminate on the ſame objects; and your paſſions repreſent the interference that ſprings from the lawful exerciſe of his own rights, as flowing from malicious deſign. But admitting that he is an enemy as well as a rival—do you not acquit him on your own principles, by your hoſtility to him? And will you add to the injury he hath already done you, a greater evil, by cheriſhing thoſe unhallowed paſſions that offend God, and diſquiet your own peace? No, theſe enmities are at once ill founded and pernicious to our own ſouls. If oppoſition to our intereſts, or our pleaſures is not ſufficient to juſtify the ſpirit of revenge—neither is,

3. Injuſtice to our character and reputation.

Character is the deareſt poſſeſſion to a good man. No wound afflicts him ſo deeply as an imputation on his honor, or his virtue? But is it ſufficient to authorize the purpoſes of revenge?—No, Religion prohibits all retaliation, except of good for evil.—Is it the proper way to vindicate our injured innocence? No, a gentle diſpoſition, and a virtuous conduct are the moſt effectual refutation of every ſlander. Is it even certain we have ſuffered the injury of which we complain?—In innumerable inſtances, if we carefully examine its grounds, we ſhall find it founded in miſrepreſentation. How many raſh and imprudent perſons take up a tale before they comprehend it, and propagate it with the coloring of their own imagination? How many malicious perſons love in this way to augment the diſſentions of ſociety? How many vain and talkative perſons permit themſelves, without reflection, to diſſeminate the moſt pernicious and unfounded hiſtories? What additions are made to the truth in paſſing only through a few mouths? How often have we known our own words to be diſtorted and invenomed by the malice or indiſcretion of others?—And ſhall we, notwithſtanding, take this uncertain ground to vindicate the moſt atrocious of all the paſſions? Poſſibly we do our brother a high injury by believing him capable of the injuſtice.

But admitting that he hath calumniated our character—may it not have been the fruit of inconſideration merely? May it not have been oc-

caſioned by the officious zeal of falſe friends who have poiſoned his mind? May it not have ſprung from dark and ſuſpicious circumſtances in our own conduct which we have not condeſcended to explain?—It becomes a good man rather to find apologies for ſuch actions than to proſecute them with rage. He ought to attribute them to the want of reflection, to the artifice of others, to the ſurprize of paſſion, to any cauſe rather than a malignant diſpoſition. A great wit once ſaid, "it is neceſſary only for mankind to converſe together freely every day to make them all of one Religion." We may ſay with at leaſt equal truth, that it is neceſſary only for men to converſe together freely, to remove a thouſand prejudices, to extinguiſh a thouſand animoſities in their origin, and notwithſtanding all the cauſes of diviſion that exiſt in the world, to make them friends.—But if there are ſome who, through weakneſs of mind, or the violence of paſſion, cannot be reclaimed, how ought a Chriſtian to treat their obloquy? Not ſurely by imitating their crime. This is uſually the proof of a vulnerable character in ourſelves. The moſt clear and honorable vindication of ourſelves is virtuous conduct. In the conſciouſneſs of innocence, virtue may be ſilent. There is, beſides, a dignity in ſilence that makes a favorable impreſſion on the world, and humbles an enemy much more than any retaliation of reproach or ſlander.—But the moſt equivocal vindication of character, and even of that courage which modern ideas have made a

ſubſtitute for character, is the ſingle combat. No aſſault on our good name can juſtify this crime—The ſpirit and the laws of the goſpel condemn it—A brave and virtuous man does not need it—The moſt illuſtrious nations of antiquity, who civilized the earth, and who adorned human nature by their talents, knew no ſuch methods to vindicate their injured honor, or to prop an infirm reputation. On this ſubject, however, I have already made the neceſſary reflections; and ſhall now diſmiſs the whole by remarking, that as they are our vanity and pride that are chiefly hurt by the tales of calumny, ſo they are theſe principles, ſo little becoming the imperfection of human nature, that give to the reſentful paſſions their greateſt force. Thus weak and inſufficient are all thoſe cauſes which are uſually urged to juſtify the ſpirit of revenge.

And now, in the concluſion of this diſcourſe, let me call your attention to the following reflections.

1. The firſt that I make is, that as it becomes a good man never to give juſt occaſion of offence to others, it becomes him alſo if he has been, at any time, ſurprized by his paſſions, to efface his fault by a ſpeedy and candid acknowledgement. There is often more goodneſs and greatneſs of mind diſplayed in acknowledging, than in not having committed an error. Caution in offending, and candor in confeſſing, are neceſſary perhaps to enable us with ſincerity to forgive. Obedience to this

law is leſs difficult when we are not conſcious of a fault ourſelves. There is a dignity in innocence that does not fear to be degraded by ſtooping to pardon. But if we have been betrayed to do wrong, and have not fortitude of mind enough to confeſs it, our own fault becomes the greateſt obſtacle to our duty, and an unforgiving ſpirit is cheriſhed by a falſe ſentiment of honor.

2. This duty I might recommend from the generoſity and nobleneſs of its principle—from the approbation of mankind—and from the tranquility and peace with which it will be accompanied in our own breaſts—But apart from all theſe conſiderations, which can touch only a great and worthy mind, it is a duty that addreſſes itſelf to our intereſt and our fears—it is enjoined by all the authority, and enforced by all the terrors of Religion—*for if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father who is in Heaven, forgive your treſpaſſes.*—Haughty and revengeful ſpirits! look up to that tribunal where your own puniſhment awaits you, and let the awful majeſty of divine juſtice reſtrain your pride and rage! Remember that the meaſure which you mete to others ſhall be meaſured to you again. A reſentful unforgiving temper can hope for no indulgence from the righteous judge. On the other hand, meekneſs, gentleneſs, forgiveneſs, as they are abundant ſources of inward conſolation on earth, ſo they lead alſo to the regions of eternal peace in Heaven.

3. This ſubject ſuggeſts the ardent charity with which we ought to embrace our brethren who have not injured us. If hoſtile intentions are to be forgiven—if actual injuries are to be forgotten—if enemies are to be beloved, with what warm affection ought we to regard thoſe who are innocent?—Thoſe who embrace us with kindneſs?—Thoſe who are our ſincere and active friends?—Thoſe who are connected with us by the moſt tender relations?—And above all, thoſe who add to theſe endearing ties, their union with us in the houſehold of faith?—The united bands of humanity, friendſhip and religion, form the moſt powerful obligation to all the uſeful and amiable offices of fraternal love. And the power of forgiving an injury will be a certain pledge to ourſelves and others of all that ſhall be attentive, tender and beneficent in the ordinary conduct of our life, and our commerce with ſociety.

4. Finally, this ſubject is cloſely connected with piety as well as with morals. The tempers and habits of men give a tincture to the ſpirit of their Religion. The paſſions of revenge and hatred have contributed to clothe the divine nature in thoſe gloomy terrors, in which the ſuperſtitions of all ages have more or leſs inveſted it. The Deity has appeared in the moſt diſmal forms, where his votaries have been the moſt unrelenting. Placid manners, on the other hand, and a benevolent diſpoſition, naturally repreſent him in the charms of

benignity and love. Our hearts then accord with the promiſe of our Saviour, and recommend it to our faith—*If ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you.* Put on therefore, my brethren, the meekneſs of the bleſſed Jeſus, who on the croſs prayed for his murderers. Prove yourſelves to be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, by that ſpirit of love which is his image. You will hereby illuſtrate the beauty of Religion in the view of men—you will augment and extend the happineſs of ſociety—you will cultivate in your own boſoms the rich conſolations of piety, and the hopes of eternal life—and you will at once animate your devotions, and increaſe the happineſs which a good man finds in them, by ſtrengthening your faith in the divine mercy.

Do thou, O moſt holy and gracious God! create and cheriſh in our hearts, more and more, theſe heavenly diſpoſitions, for the ſake of Chriſt our Lord! To whom with *thee*, and the eternal ſpirit, be rendered glory everlaſting. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE SPIRITUAL DEATH AND LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

BY

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GAL. ii. 20.

I am crucified with Chriſt; neverthelefs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.

TO underſtand theſe words, it is neceſſary to attend to their connection. The apoſtle, in the former part of the epiſtle, vindicates himſelf againſt the miſrepreſentations of falſe teachers in the Galatian Church; who alledged that he was no apoſtle, and that he taught doctrines contrary to Peter, and the other apoſtles. In the 16th verſe of this chapter, he begins to eſtabliſh and defend the doctrine of juſtification by faith, which theſe teachers attempted to ſubvert. They urged the ſtrict obſervance of the ceremonial law, and particularly of circumciſion, as neceſſary to ſalva-

tion. The apoſtle, on the other hand, excludes all works, whether of the ceremonial or moral law, from having any influence upon it; and directs to ſeek righteouſneſs only through faith in Chriſt. He likewiſe anſwers that old and common objection made by adverſaries, that if perſons be not juſtified by their obedience to the law, then a door is opened to licentiouſneſs, and Chriſt becomes the miniſter of ſin. This he rejects, by preſſing holineſs, or a ſtrict conformity to the moral law; and leſt they might ſay, that this was *building again* what he had *deſtroyed*, he ſhows, that faith and obedience are always united; that the ſame faith, which looks to Chriſt for the pardon of ſin, derives from him alſo, ſtrength to ſubdue it. *I through the law*, ſays he, in the 19th verſe, *am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* By being dead to the law, we are not to underſtand, the being freed from it as a rule of life; but the not putting confidence in obedience to it, for juſtification. That obedience which the law demands, has been fulfilled by Chriſt the ſurety of the believer, and accepted in his behalf. He is alſo dead to the law, as being delivered from the curſe of it. But though the law has neither power to ſave, nor to condemn him, yet he is under obligation to live unto God. His being indebted to Chriſt, is ſo far from excuſing him, that it increaſes the obligation, and is the moſt powerful inducement to holineſs of life. This the apoſtle farther explains and enforces in the text.

I am crucified with Chriſt. "Through this crucified one, I die to the law, ſin, and the world;—and my death reſembles his. Nevertheleſs, as he roſe and lives forevermore, ſo I live ſpiritually; having grace here, the earneſt of future glory.—Strictly ſpeaking, however, it is not I that live. I am neither the cauſe nor the promoter of this life; *but Chriſt liveth in me;* by his ſpirit directing the inclinations of my heart. *And the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* The great inſtrument of my life is, a firm belief that Jeſus, who was crucified, is the Son of God. Here I lay hold upon *the hope ſet before* me; and this hope is *as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt.*" The apoſtle ſpeaks in the firſt perſon, *I*, and thus declares his own experience with reſpect to the doctrine he defends. This was his condition, and is truly the condition of all believers; though they may not be able, ſo clearly, to adopt his language, or to uſe the appropriating words, *who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I ſhall direct your attention to the leading thoughts; and therefore, I ſhall endeavor to ſhow, *Firſt*, What is implied in being crucified with Chriſt.—*Secondly*, What we are to underſtand, by Chriſt living in the believer; and point out the great influence of faith in the divine life. Or, in fewer words, ſhow—How the believer dies, and how he lives.

I. Expreſſions ſimilar to this, of being *crucified with Chriſt*, are more than once uſed in the wri-

tings of the apoſtle. No one will be ſo weak as to imagine that Paul was a ſharer with Chriſt in the merit of his ſufferings. Such a thought would be horrid and blaſphemous. Thus, though he deſires to *know the fellowſhip of his ſufferings*, yet he means only, to enjoy the benefit of them and be conformed to them in his own. Seeing his Lord ſuffered, he did not repine, but rejoiced in ſuffering for his ſake. Accordingly he ſays, in another place, *if ſo be that we ſuffer with him*. How ſuffer with him? He means, in his cauſe; and by aſſiſtance derived from him. This is a part of conformity to Chriſt, as well as that he makes their ſufferings his own, by tenderly ſympathizing with them, ſtrengthening and rewarding them.—There is implied in being crucified with Chriſt,

Firſt, A refuſing obedience to the ceremonial law, as being no longer neceſſary to ſalvation. It was only temporary. The deſign being fulfilled, it ceaſed to be of farther uſe. *The law*, ſays the apoſtle, *was our ſchool-maſter, to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a ſchool-maſter.* Though certain erroneous teachers held that it was ſtill obligatory, yet he declares, that he was crucified with Chriſt; that his death put an end to this legal ſervice. When he ſaid, *it is finiſhed*, this law was aboliſhed, and a new diſpenſation introduced.

Secondly, there is implied a chearfulneſs in undergoing all that ſcorn and contempt with which

firm adherence to the doctrine of the croſs was attended. *Chriſt crucified* was, *unto the Jews, a ſtumbling block, and unto the Greeks, fooliſhneſs.* Notwithſtanding the offence of the croſs, the oppoſition to it, and the reproach to which the promoters of it were expoſed, the apoſtle was *not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt.* While his enemies in the Church conſtrained their proſelytes to be circumciſed, and gloried in it, he rejected, with deteſtation, the thought of glorying, *ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Suffice it juſt to mention theſe, as what may be implied when we conſider the ſcope of the epiſtle, and the circumſtances of Chriſtians in the primitive ſtate of the Church.

Thirdly, There is implied in this expreſſion, a partaking of the merits of the death of Chriſt, and the being dead to the moral law, in the manner mentioned in the preceding verſe. As in this and other places, the ceremonial law is to be underſtood, ſo the moral is evidently to be included.

The believer is juſtified on account of the perfect obedience and meritorious death of Chriſt; the one anſwering to the precept of the law, and the other to the violation of it. Neither of theſe can be performed in his own perſon, the law admitting of no leſs than a perfect obedience, and the ſatisfaction it requires being infinite. This inability does not ariſe from any inſufficiency in the law, but from that weakneſs in man, which has

taken place ſince the fall. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for ſin condemned ſin in the fleſh; that the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled in us.* Jeſus Chriſt, being every way equal to the work of redemption, hath obeyed and ſuffered as the repreſentative of all his ſpiritual ſeed. This righteouſneſs is imputed to the believer. He is crucified with Chriſt. The demands of the law are anſwered for him by Chriſt, and accepted by God. In the plan of redemption, it is accounted the ſame as if the believer had done it perſonally.

In the firſt covenant, Adam, repreſenting his poſterity, by his failure, involved them in ſin and miſery: in the ſecond covenant, Chriſt, repreſenting his choſen, reſtores them to the favor of God. *For as by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners; ſo by the obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus.* The believer renounces his own righteouſneſs as the ground of confidence before God. Any thing he does or ſuffers is neither whole nor part of the righteouſneſs which ſaves him. The Apoſtle, in the third chapter of his epiſtle to the Philippians, ſets this matter in a clear point of light. *If any other man,* ſays he, *thinketh that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more.* Then having ſummed up his privileges, and told us, that *touching the righteouſneſs which is in the law,* he was *blameleſs,* he adds, *But*

what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs to Chriſt. Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Chriſt; and be found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.— This righteouſneſs, which is imputed to the believer, as the only foundation of his acceptance with God, and title to eternal life, does not ſupercede the neceſſity of an inherent righteouſneſs. The pardon of ſin and the deſtruction of it in the ſoul, are inſeparable; and therefore,

In the *fourth* place, There is implied, in being crucified with Chriſt, an experience of the efficacy of his death. This is, no doubt, an important, if not the principal idea in the words; and which we find plainly expreſſed in the following paſſages: *Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin. And they, that are Chriſt's, have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts.* By the body of ſin in the one place, and the fleſh in the other, is meant that corrupt nature which mankind inherit ſince their apoſtacy; that evil propenſity and oppoſition to holineſs which is in us. It has been called the power or dominion of ſin; and conſiſts in want of conformity to God, and a diſpoſition to offend.

The perſon who is crucified with Chriſt is, in ſome meaſure, brought to this conformity, the power of ſin being ſubdued. The obedience and death of Chriſt produce this, as in conſequence of theſe, the holy ſpirit creates anew the heart, and cheriſhes holy deſires and reſolutions. Under the influence of this bleſſed agent, the believer is ſanctified and prepared for the enjoyment of God. The great means of carrying on this work, are the truths of the everlaſting goſpel; eſpecially thoſe which reſpect the ſufferings and death of the Saviour.

The contemplation of this amazing object crucifies ſin in the ſoul. Here is a diſplay of the holineſs and juſtice of God. He is ſo holy, that he will manifeſt his abhorrence of ſin; and ſo juſt, that he will by no means clear the guilty. Theſe perfections of Deity, ſhining in the ſufferings of Chriſt, burn up the droſs of ſin, and inſpire with the ſtrongeſt deteſtation againſt it. Here is a diſplay of love and mercy ſufficient to melt the ſoul and ſtir up every grateful feeling. Holineſs, juſtice, and mercy are ſweetly blended. Sin is puniſhed and the ſinner ſaved. Pardon is free and unbounded, and yet ſin diſcountenanced; nay, effectually deſtroyed, expires on the croſs. Every view the believer takes of his bleeding Saviour, ſin receives a wound. He looks upon him whom he has pierced and mourns. He ſuffers real agony, in that his ſins were the occaſion of his bitter death; his ſins, the nails and ſpear

that pierced his ſacred body, and opened thoſe wounds which ſtreamed ſalvation to the children of men. Thus is the believer crucified with Chriſt; and the death of ſin in him, reſembles a crucifixion. It was a painful, ſhameful, lingering, and accurſed death; and ſo is the death of ſin.

It is painful. The firſt entrance upon a religious courſe is difficult; and the more ſo, where ſin has long had the dominion. Converſion is a ſtraight gate through which we muſt paſs, and holineſs a narrow way, in which we muſt walk to eternal life. The ſinner's return to God is likened by our Saviour to a ſecond birth, and, among other reaſons, becauſe it is painful. The Chriſtian life is compared to a race, to a fight, and ſuch things in which vigorous exertions are required. There are many luſts dear as a right eye and a right hand which muſt be plucked out and cut off. *If any man will come after me*, ſays Chriſt, *let him deny himſelf and take up his croſs and follow me*. We muſt be denied to ourſelves and to the world; difficulties are to be ſurmounted, temptations reſiſted, injuries forgiven, and reproaches endured. This is a painful work, often like to be overcome, and ſtill renewing the combat. The Apoſtle, groaning under the weight of corruption, cried, *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death!*

Again, It is ſhameful. When iniquities prevail, the believer is covered with ſhame and confuſion of face. This may riſe to ſuch a degree,

that he will be tempted to ceaſe from ſeeking God. After a baſe and ungrateful conduct, he is afraid to appear in the divine preſence; when he does, he *abhors himſelf and repents in duſt and aſhes.* The Pſalmiſt, convinced of his error, made this acknowledgment—*So fooliſh was I and ignorant: I was as a beaſt before thee.* When the Saviour, after an unkind and untender walk, condeſcends to give us tokens of his love, and ſhew us, as he did unbelieving Thomas, his hands and his ſide, how is ſin crucified with ſhame!

Again, The death of ſin is very lingering. It is dying from the moment Chriſt is formed in the ſoul, till glory commences. To what end are the means of grace? To what end the numerous afflictions and temptations which befal the Chriſtian, as he paſſes through life, but to deſtroy ſin? And yet it ſtill lives. It withdraws but to return; it ſleeps but to awake again. Like a monſter of many heads, though deprived of one, it has another; nay, one ſhoots out from the place another was lopped off.

Moreover, the death of the croſs was an accurſed death; inflicted on none but thoſe guilty of the blackeſt crimes; ſuch as were accurſed of men, and held to be accurſed of God too. Sin is that which has introduced death into the world and all our wo; is that abominable thing which the Lord hates; and, therefore, is the object of the greateſt hatred with the believer. He ſeeks the deſtruction of it without mercy.

From theſe conſiderations we may ſee the propriety and force of this expreſſion, *crucified with Chriſt*, and all of the like kind in ſcripture.

In the *laſt* place, There is implied a ſelf-denied temper towards this preſent world. Though this may be included in the former particulars, yet it may be conſidered as ſomething diſtinct, and is of importance in the preſent ſubject. *God forbid*, ſays the Apoſtle, *that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* We cannot argue from hence, that we ſhould caſt off all care and concern about the world; nor that every degree of deſire after, and delight in the things of the world is ſinful; nor yet that we are to withdraw ourſelves from the company and converſation of the men of the world: but that, from a ſenſe of the vanity and emptineſs of the world, our hopes and expectations of happineſs ought not to be placed upon it, and that we ought to cheerfully part with every earthly thing, and go to death for Chriſt, if he calls us to it. Hear his own words: *He, that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he, that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he, that taketh not his croſs and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life ſhall loſe it; and he, that loſeth his life for my ſake ſhall find it.* He hath likewiſe, in this reſpect, left us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. He was denied to the riches and honors of this world;

and *for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame.*

In the early days of the church, the profeſſion of the Religion of Jeſus expoſed perſons to the hazard of their lives and eſtates, and particularly the publiſhers of the Goſpel could expect nothing elſe but a conſtant ſcene of difficulties and perſecution. The Apoſtle has recorded many trials and diſtreſſes which he encountered; and, it is ſaid, that he ſuffered a violent death at laſt: ſo that there is a peculiar emphaſis in his ſaying, that he was crucified with Chriſt. Every believer, indeed, ought to be a martyr in his temper, and hang ſo looſe to this world and its enjoyments; nay, to life itſelf, that he may readily part with all to win Chriſt.

Theſe things are implied in the crucifixion of the believer. I proceed now,

II. To conſider his life. *Chriſt liveth in* him; and the life which he now lives in the fleſh, is *by the faith of the Son of God.*

This is the divine or ſpiritual life, which he lives in conſequence of ſin being mortified, and the heart renewed. As he dies to ſin, ſo he riſes to holineſs. So we are taught in theſe words—*That ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts; and be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.* Here is the corrupt nature, called the old man, which is put off, or

crucified with Chriſt; and the ſpiritual life called the new man, becauſe a new principle is infuſed; and this new man is the image of God, conſiſting in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. It is the conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God.

The manner in which Chriſt lives in the believer, is by his holy ſpirit, who begins and carries on the divine life. We cannot make ourſelves alive to God. That Almighty power which called, *Lazarus come forth*, muſt call us from the death of ſin. That divine ſpirit, who quickened the dead body of the Saviour, when it lay in the tomb, muſt quicken our ſouls to a life of grace.—Having begun the work, he carries it on to perfection; and, for this purpoſe, he dwells and lives in believers; incites holy deſires; directs the meditations of the heart; enables them to overcome and ſubdue their luſts; ſtrengthens them under afflictions; and quickens them in the way of duty. Chriſt thus living in them, they are actuated by the ſame temper, and ſeek the ſame things. They imitate his example, and endeavor to reſemble him, as far as their nature and circumſtances will admit.

The great inſtrument of this ſpiritual life is faith. By this they are united to the Son of God; depend upon his merits for pardon, and derive influences for ſanctification. It is called *the faith of the Son of God*, becauſe he is the great object of it, and becauſe it is of his beſtowing. Perhaps there

is ſomething in this phraſe more peculiar to the time in which the apoſtle lived. The faith of the Son of God; that is, a firm belief that Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified on Calvary, was the true and expected Meſſiah; that he was no impoſtor, but really the Son of God; that he roſe again and aſcended up into Heaven; and that there is forgiveneſs of ſins through his blood. Theſe were the great truths upon which the apoſtle inſiſted in his diſcourſes, and propoſed for the belief of his hearers. When he preached at Athens, we find that ſome ſaid, *He ſeemeth to be a ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods; becauſe he preached unto them Jeſus, and the reſurrection.* To have a proper notion how the doctrine of a crucified Saviour appeared at its firſt publication, we muſt imagine ourſelves in their place, with all their prejudices in favor of a falſe religion. Among us we are early initiated in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, and taught from childhood, that Jeſus is the Son of God, the true and only Saviour; and, therefore, we are in danger of contenting ourſelves with a belief *merely ſpeculative.* There was not ſo much danger at the firſt publication of the goſpel; becauſe it can hardly be admitted, that any would embrace a religion ſo contrary to human wiſdom—attended with ſuch ignominy and reproach—and, withal, expoſing its friends to ſo much hazard and difficulty, unleſs they felt the power of it, and were ſincere in their profeſſion. What multitudes profeſs it now, whoſe lives loudly teſtify againſt them! If they believe him to be

the Son of God, where is the efficacy of his death upon them? Where that transformation into the divine image, which always accompanies a view of divine glory, ſhining in the ſufferings of this wonderful perſon?

Faith in Chriſt, as being the Son of God, is that by which every believer lives. Allow me, in a few particulars, to point out its influence.

Firſt, Faith is that act of the ſoul, which receives and reſts upon the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for pardon and acceptance with God. The believer, convinced of his guilt, unworthineſs, and utter inability, accepts the free offer of ſalvation, made in the goſpel, as his only ground of hope. This exerciſe he has occaſion often to repeat; not that his juſtification before God is incomplete, or that he needs to be often juſtified; but that a manifeſtation of his intereſt in the fulneſs of Chriſt, is neceſſary to his encouragement and comfort.

Secondly, By faith, influences are derived, for the mortification of ſin and the promotion of holineſs. *He that abideth in me*, ſaith Chriſt, *and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing*. The ſubſtance of theſe things having been already ſaid, all that may be neceſſary to add is, that although the righteouſneſs of Chriſt be the meritorious cauſe of juſtification, and the ſpirit of Chriſt the efficacious cauſe of ſanctification, yet faith is that which intereſts us in theſe bleſſings, and is the mean of their conveyance.

Once more, Faith influences the believer to live with regard to another world. It is described in the epistle to the Hebrews, to be, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* It is a confident expectation of the things which God hath promised. It realizes the invisible glories of a future state, and causes us to believe them as strongly as what we see with the bodily eyes. The men of the world live by sense. External objects engage the whole of their attention and affections. The things of another world are future and invisible; and, therefore, they do not strike and affect them. It is faith which makes them present and visible.

The believer seeks *a better country, that is an heavenly.* He knows that if the *earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved*, he has *a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*— What though difficulties beset him on every side? It is the promise of a gracious God, that *all things shall work together for his good.* The present afflictions are light and momentary, compared to an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* What though he is now immured in frail flesh and blood? Before long this *mortal shall put on immortality*, and he shall be made inconceivably happy in the pure mansions of heavenly glory. He may be stripped of every earthly comfort, but there is a joy which no man can take from him. Amidst the vain and shifting scenes of life, he has an immoveable rock to lean upon; *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to*

day, and for ever. Perſecutors may kill the body, but the ſoul is incapable of injury. This heavenly ſpark ſhall ſurvive the rage of men, and the malice of devils; aſcend to the God of all conſolation; be re-united to the body, faſhioned like unto the glorious body of Chriſt, and be ever with him.

Faith preſenting theſe things, and affording a ſure expectation of them, influences the Chriſtian to live above this world; and to raiſe his views *to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for him.*

Let us now turn our attention to ſome improvement of this ſubject.

Firſt, Learn, my brethren, that the Religion of Jeſus, leads to ſtrict holineſs of heart and life. If any tell you, that the doctrine of ſalvation, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, encourages ſin, believe them not; for ſcripture and experience contradict it. Who live the beſt?—Thoſe who contend for free grace, or thoſe who reſt upon their works? It too often happens, that thoſe who boaſt of their works, have the leaſt to ſhow; and there is reaſon to believe, that they have never, ſufficiently, ſeen the depravity of their own hearts, and the ſpirituality and extent of the divine law.

While we are juſtified freely through the redemption that is in Chriſt, including both his active and paſſive obedience, there is the powerful

operation of grace to form the heart. Shall it be ſaid, if Chriſt obeyed the preceptive part of the law in our room, what obedience is left for us? This very objection, in ſubſtance, has been anſwered long ago, by an inſpired pen. *Shall we continue in ſin, that grace may abound? God forbid: how ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein?* A dependance upon the active obedience of Chriſt, for a title to eternal life, and obedience in our own perſons are not inconſiſtent either in ſentiment or practice. *For he that is dead, is freed from ſin. Now if we be dead with Chriſt, we believe that we ſhall alſo live with him.* It is impoſſible that believers ſhould live in ſin; becauſe it is weakened on their firſt union with Chriſt, and afterwards gradually deſtroyed. Grace is communicated for this purpoſe, and their obligations to obedience are infinite. The love of Chriſt conſtrains them. It certainly affords a moſt encouraging reflection, that in the Lord, is not only righteouſneſs but ſtrength. This is a ſource of joy and comfort. This quickens and animates in the ways of holineſs.

Secondly, This ſubject ought to be faithfully improved for the trial of ourſelves. As far as we hear with application, ſo far we hear properly. When we hear the ſtate of a believer deſcribed, ought we not to aſk ourſelves, have we experienced any thing like it? Or, is it new, ſtrange, and unintelligible to us?—Theſe things concern us all, and require our attention now, as much as when they were firſt written; for it ever will remain

true, that the believer is crucified with Chriſt; that Chriſt lives in him; and that he lives by faith, in the manner which has been explained. Know ye, then, what theſe mean? Have you reaſon to believe that you are intereſted in the merits of Chriſt? Is the power of ſin broken in your ſouls? Do you deſire the death of it, root and branch? Do you know what it is to live by faith? Have you ever had ſuch an affecting view of the Son of God ſuffering in the room of ſinners, that your hearts were melted to genuine ſorrow for ſin, and you made willing to ſurrender yourſelves without reſerve to him? And have you been frequently uſed to ſuch exerciſes?

Perhaps, ſome are ſaying, "We have never been able to anſwer theſe queſtions ſatisfactorily to ourſelves. At times, we have had ground of hope, but preſently we were in darkneſs again. We find the principle of ſin ſo ſtrong within us, that we fear it has never been crucified. Evil thoughts, in multitudes, break in upon us; our affections are ſo earthly; we feel ſuch coldneſs and wandering in duty; nay, ſometimes ſin appears to have the entire ſway; and therefore, we are ready to conclude, that we are not the children of God." If you are ſenſible of theſe things; if you ſtrive againſt them; and if you ſpread them as matter of complaint before God, they do not make againſt you. It is not expected that ſin ſhould be fully dead. Live and ſtir it will; elſe there would be no occaſion of a warfare. If there were no pain

and ſtruggle, and groaning, where would be the propriety of calling it a crucifixion? The queſtion is, Do you truly hate all ſin, and deſire deliverance from it more than from any thing beſides? Is the way of ſalvation precious to you on this very account, becauſe it has provided for the death of ſin? Have you often an affecting ſenſe of the holy nature of God, and your great diſconformity to him? Can you adopt the language of the Pſalmiſt, *I have ſeen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad?* The more you have of this exerciſe, the more it evinces the truth of your Religion. It is a bad ſign, when we find, in ourſelves, no cauſe of complaint.

Some, it may be, have blaſphemous thoughts ſuggeſted to their minds; are tempted to doubt the very exiſtence of a God, and the reality of all Religion. Neither is this an evidence of the want of grace; but that Satan deſires to *ſift them as wheat.* A perſon is not accountable for theſe thoughts, unleſs they are harbored and encouraged in his breaſt.

Examine, then, and try yourſelves.—Beware of preſumption on the one hand, and of tempting God on the other, by deſpiſing the day of ſmall things. If you deſire, above all, the favor of God; if you would not willingly indulge yourſelves in any known ſin; if you are endeavoring to have your hearts right with God, and are ſincerely engaged in the way of duty: though iniquities pre-

vail againſt you, and though you walk in darkneſs and have no light, yet there is reaſon to expect that God will, in due time, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and put gladneſs in your hearts. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thine heart: wait I ſay on the Lord.*

But do not ſome of you, my hearers, know, upon reflection, that you are ſtrangers to the exerciſes which have been deſcribed? *The natural man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God: for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* Crucified and yet live! Not live, but Chriſt lives in them! Live a natural life, and yet by faith, a ſpiritual one! On earth, and yet the affections and converſation in Heaven! What paradoxes are theſe! How myſterious and difficult a thing to be a Chriſtian!—O beſtir yourſelves and ſet about the great work. Dream not of happineſs while you are ſecure and unconcerned. While ſin reigns in you, and while you neglect the means of grace, on what foundation can you hope for eternal life? By nature, you are oppoſed to good, and wholly inclined to evil; and unleſs changed by grace, you can never inherit the kingdom of God. You muſt be crucified to your own righteouſneſs, to your luſts, and to the world, if ever you arrive there. It is no matter what any man profeſſes, that is, it will not avail for his ſalvation, unleſs it influence the practice; unleſs the Son of God cover the ſoul with his perfect righteouſneſs, and impreſs on it the divine

image. To this I would bring you, my hearers, and unleſs you are brought to this, though your ſouls were worth ten thouſand worlds, they muſt fall under the juſtice of the great and terrible God.

Suffer the word of exhortation, to turn and live. Thoſe ſins you ſo dearly love will be your ruin. Be perſuaded to part with them. Your carnal joys and pleaſures will lead you down to the region of ſorrow. Be entreated to diſmiſs them. You walk on a dreadful ſlippery precipice, and beneath you are everlaſting burnings. Proceed not a ſtep further. While there is hope, turn. Betake you to the duties of Religion. Call upon the Lord, that you periſh not. Lay hold on the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. He is able and willing to ſave you. You ought not to heſitate a moment, when your all is at ſtake. Receive an offered Saviour, and you ſhall be happy in ſoul and body for ever. Neglect him, and you muſt be eternally wretched. There is ſalvation in no other; and there is a complete one in him. There is the pardon of ſin, by his blood, and the death of ſin by his ſpirit. There is peace of conſcience, guidance through life, comfort in trouble, joy more than can be expreſſed, with every neceſſary grace; and a happineſs after death, riſing to the very height of your wiſhes and laſting as God himſelf. Why then ſhould you continue in the love and practice of ſin? Why in the neglect of known duty? Why ſhould Religion be deferred for a ſingle day or hour? Have not ſome of you deferred it ſo often already, as to con-

vince you that this is the moſt groſs deluſion? Think not of a time to come. We truſt in vain to futurity. Before the ſetting ſun, your eyes and mine may be cloſed in the ſleep of death. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of ſalvation.* This day, and not the next; this hour, and not the next; this moment, and not the next. *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave whither thou goeſt.*

To conclude, thoſe of you, my brethren, whoſe conſciences teſtify, that you are not ſtrangers to theſe ſpiritual exerciſes, ſtrive to grow more and more in conformity to God. This is the beſt evidence of your ſincerity. You have not *already attained, neither are already perfect.*—Learn that your only help is laid on the righteouſneſs and ſtrength of your exalted Redeemer. Live by faith in him. *Of his fulneſs receive, and grace for grace.* Be not diſcouraged under any difficulties; *being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt: Unto them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalvation.*

SERMON XIV.*

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF THE WICKED.

BY

WILLIAM LINN, D. D.
One of the Miniſters of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

ISAIAH lvii. 21.

There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.

YOU will eaſily remember, my brethren, that ſome time ago, I had the happineſs of addreſſing you on the proſpect of a ſafe and honorable peace being reſtored to our diſtreſſed land.—You were then pleaſed to hear me with attention; and your patriotiſm kindly approved what was ſincerely aimed to expreſs our joy, and excite our gratitude to the munificent Donor of all things. It is hoped that we and ſucceeding generations, will continue to enjoy temporal peace and proſperity.

NOTE.

* The two following Sermons were written and preached in Pennſylvania, ſoon after the eſtabliſhment of peace, in the year 1783. Several reaſons have induced the author to retain nearly the original form.

But, while we rejoice in the goodneſs of the Lord, we ought to remember, that our duration in this world is ſhort—that only they can be happy who enjoy the divine favor—nay, that without this, preſent advantages will make our condemnation, at laſt, the more terrible. Let none, therefore, ſay to their ſouls, "Take your eaſe—the deſolation of war is now over—our difficulties are removed—and peace and plenty have once more taken up their habitation with us;"—for the Lord declares, in the words of the text, *There is no peace to the wicked.* Though the long and bloody conflict is at an end, yet if we have not a proper temper towards God, we are ſtill in the utmoſt danger; if not in this world, yet in that which is to come; when he will render to every one according to his works, and pour out his wrath on the wicked without any mixture of mercy.

To alarm our fears, and excite us to ſeek the Lord while he may be found, I ſhall, with plainneſs and freedom, ſhow, *Firſt*, Who come under the deſcription of the wicked; and, *Secondly*, In what reſpects there is no peace to ſuch.

I. In general, all they are properly denominated wicked who have never undergone a change of heart. Mankind, by nature, have no inclination to the ſervice of God. They are repreſented in ſcripture, as *without ſtrength and ungodly*—as *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*—as *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, and even as *enmity* itſelf againſt God.

Hence ariſes the neceſſity of a great and ſupernatural change; which our Saviour compares to a *ſecond birth*; and it is ſet forth by other ſimilitudes in the writings of the apoſtles. It is likened to a *reſurrection*—to a *new creation*—to a *tranſlation from darkneſs to light*; all which teach us, that before we can be accepted of God, and entitled to his favor, ſome extraordinary work muſt take place upon us. To deny this, we muſt reject both reaſon and revelation; for both conſpire in declaring that man is degenerate, and that while he continues in this ſtate, he cannot have communion with a holy God. As ſoon might we reconcile light and darkneſs, or bring the moſt oppoſite extremes together.

Whatever kinds, and whatever degrees of wickedneſs there are, they all proceed from an innate depravity of mind. Hear the words of Chriſt; *For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetouſneſs, wickedneſs, deceit, laciviouſneſs, an evil eye, blaſphemy, pride, fooliſhneſs; all theſe evil things come from within.* Every unrenewed perſon has, in his nature, the ſeeds of all evil; and which appear more or leſs in his life, according as opportunities are afforded to nouriſh and ſtrengthen them. To aſſiſt us in judging the better of our own characters, let us attend to the different ways in which this root of bitterneſs diſcovers itſelf.

Firſt, Some are groſsly ignorant of the plain and eſſential doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion,

amidſt the beſt means to gain an acquaintance with them. Though the ſcriptures are in their poſſeſſion, together with excellent helps by the writings of pious men, and inſtructions from the pulpit, yet they are unable to give any ſatisfactory account of thoſe truths, on which their eternal ſalvation depends. This is not occaſioned by want of capacity, but by utter neglect of divine things, and argues their ſpiritual death. The holy oracles, which contain the words of eternal life, neglected, gather duſt; while books of amuſement and earthly purſuits employ the whole of their time. Theſe ſwallow up their thoughts through the day, and recline with them on their pillow at night. Theſe will not allow them to remember the ſabbath-day to keep it holy.

We find many of this character who are wiſe in their own conceit, for pride and ignorance moſtly dwell together. "We have," ſay they, "a ſufficient knowledge of our duty, and we need not be informed of it. If we act wrong, the blame is our own, and we know not, why any one ſhould intermeddle with our buſineſs." Well might Solomon ſay, *There is more hope of a fool than of* ſuch perſons. Their minds are dark, and they have cloſed every avenue by which light might enter. *Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* Be aſſured there can be no true Religion without a good meaſure of knowledge, and a deſire of growing in

it. We cannot love and worſhip an unknown God. Whoever among you are ignorant of the great truths of revelation, are in darkneſs even until now.

Secondly, Some break out into open acts of wickedneſs. Such are drunkards, ſwearers, unclean perſons, extortioners, ſabbath breakers and mockers at Religion. Theſe are they whoſe *ſins are open beforehand, going before to judgment*. Were we to rank no others, under the goſpel, in the claſs of the wicked, but theſe, how great a number would be found! Reckon even common ſwearers, thoſe audacious men, who call for the vengeance of a God upon themſelves and others, as well as uſe the names of Lord and Chriſt, and ſacred things with irreverent lips: and we muſt reckon—how dreadful to tell it! multitudes, who have been baptized and educated among profeſſing Chriſtians. When to theſe we add, laſcivious talkers and actors, inſatiable lovers of ſtrong drink, thoſe who ſpend the ſabbath in ſleep, in viſiting, in worldly thoughts and converſation, or in worſe; thoſe who ſuppoſe that *gain is godlineſs*; who cheat and over-reach their neighbor; and thoſe whoſe wit never ſhines but in making a jeſt of the Bible, and ſerious perſons, how does the diſmal catalogue ſwell! ſurely it will be agreed that all ſuch characters are wicked; and that none of theſe *ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*.

Thirdly, Others, though free from groſs immoralities, are yet wicked, becauſe they neglect the

duties of Religion. There are ſins of commiſſion and there are ſins of omiſſion. We are guilty before God, when we do not perform what he hath enjoined, as well as when we commit what he hath forbidden. All, therefore, who live in the habitual omiſſion of what is required, come ſhort of, and will be condemned by that law which is holy, juſt and good. Not only is the unjuſt man a ſinner, but the uncharitable alſo; not only he that curſeth his father and mother, but he that honoreth them not; not only the profane but the prayerleſs. We muſt not divide the law in our practice. One part muſt be done, and the other not left undone. *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* "Some ſins in themſelves, and by reaſon of ſeveral aggravations, are more heinous in the ſight of God than others, but every ſin deſerveth God's wrath and curſe both in this life and that which is to come." The impious wretch, whoſe mouth is full of blaſphemy and deceit, may deſerve a more dreadful puniſhment; and yet the prayerleſs perſon will go down to miſery as ſurely as he.

Having mentioned the important duty of prayer, allow me to ſay, that it is with an ill face that any, who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, neglect it in their families. Social, as well as ſecret worſhip, is indiſpenſably neceſſary. Thoſe who omit it, do not diſtinguiſh themſelves from the ungodly world, and are unworthy of the privileges

of the church. Such ought to think ſeriouſly of theſe words of Chriſt—*Whoſoever, therefore, ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in Heaven. But whoſoever ſhall deny me, before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* What ſhall be ſaid of ſome, ſo deſtitute of any form of Religion, that they omit, what is called, ſaying grace before meat, or aſking the bleſſing of God on their food? It is not the ſneer of fools, nor the raillery of the profane, ſhould put us out of the practice of what is warranted in ſcripture; conſonant to reaſon, and cuſtomary among all denominations of Chriſtians whatſoever. The perſon who does not often realize his dependance upon God; who does not in every thing give thanks; and who does not, on proper occaſions, openly acknowledge God, by calling on his name, has no title to be thought religious; elſe, there is no criterion, by which to judge at all.

In former days, many confeſſed Chriſt at the hazard, and even the loſs of their lives. Have we found an eaſier way to Heaven? Can we go there, without any confeſſion? Is religion of ſuch a nature that we may mould it as we pleaſe? The faſhion of this world paſſeth away, but be aſſured, God and religion are *ever the ſame.* The divine precepts will not bend to you. They are fixed and immutable. On no other terms can you, be a diſciple of Chriſt, than by *taking up your croſs and following after him.* If the world deride you as ſtiff and un-

faſhionable, it is a perſecution you muſt ſuffer for his name's ſake. He hath ſaid, *He that findeth his life ſhall loſe it: and he that loſeth his life for my ſake ſhall find it.*

Fourthly, There are ſome, who adopt looſe and dangerous principles; who alledge, either that the ſcripture is not true, or that the great doctrines, as generally taught, are not contained in it. Theſe are wicked, and they are corrupters of others. Too commonly they are licentious in their practice, and ſwelled with a conceit of their own abilities.

It is not eaſy to perſiſt in a courſe of iniquity, without ſomething to quiet the conſcience; and, therefore, have ſome endeavored to overturn revelation, or at leaſt to adapt it to their own depraved inclination. The infidel or deiſt is a perſon of ſuch great ſtrength of reaſon, that he ſees no need of the ſcripture, his own reaſon teaching him all that is neceſſary; he is of ſuch prodigious modeſty, that he views all the world around him, even thoſe of ſuperior talents, as a number of ſuperſtitious fools; his genius is ſo piercing as to diſcover that the Chriſtian Religion is the device of rulers and cunning prieſts, to keep the world in awe; and he wiſhes to perform the mighty ſervice of ſetting mankind free from the ſhackles wherewith they have been bound for ſo many ages. To treat him with ridicule is no more than juſt retaliation. It is the beſt weapon the Deiſt has, and of which he

is extremely fond; ſo much ſo, that one writer has made it the only proper teſt of truth.* The ſecret motive however, which leads many of this character to a rejection of ſcripture, is the deſire of being free from its reſtraints. They are wedded to their luſts, and theſe and the ſcripture are irreconcileable. Unhappy men! engaged in an undertaking deſperate and impoſſible; like one who attempts to ſtop the ſun, or remove a mountain. The words which are ſtoried of the apoſtate Julian, when mortally wounded in fighting againſt Chriſtians, will be the doleful, dying ſong, of every determined infidel; "Thou haſt conquered me, O Galilean." *Whoſoever ſhall fall on this ſtone ſhall be broken; but on whomſoever it ſhall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Though revelation be not altogether denied by others, yet it is wreſted to ſuit the depraved taſte of mankind. They ſet up corrupt reaſon in oppoſition to faith, and adopt principles which lead to licentiouſneſs. Not to be particular here, ſuffice it to ſay, that the doctrines of man's depravity, inability, and ſalvation by grace, through faith in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as they are taught in the divine word, ſo they have been always ſucceſsful for the converſion of ſinners, and the edification of ſaints. They who oppoſe theſe ſet themſelves in oppoſition to God, and ſeek to lay other foundation than what he hath laid. In-

* Shaftſbury.

deed it is to be expected, that infidelity and dangerous opinions, will have a more rapid growth in this country than heretofore. In every age, have they ſprung up to trouble the church. They will be imported from abroad, with other things injurious to our intereſt and happineſs; as well as, that they naturally increaſe with population and luxury.

Fifthly, Among the wicked, we muſt alſo rank the formaliſt and the hypocrite. Though theſe are mentioned together, yet they are of very different deſcription. The formaliſt is one, who has the form of religion; ſubmits to the drudgery of performing duty, which he has no ſpiritual life or ſtrength; he deceives himſelf; whereas the expreſs deſign of the hypocrite, is to deceive others. Of the firſt the apoſtle ſpeaks, when he ſays, *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.* However exact he may be in his cold and even round of duties, yet his heart is not right with God; and perhaps he indulges himſelf in ſin, truſting to his form to ſave him. Of hypocriſy our Saviour gives a deſcription, when he ſays, *When thou doſt thine alms, do not ſound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the ſynagogues and in the ſtreets, that they may have glory of men. And when thou prayeſt, thou ſhall not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men.* We have a remarkable inſtance of it in the Phariſees of old. They *devoured widows' houſes, and for a pretence made*

long prayers. Who would have thought that ſo excellent a thing as religion would be ſo baſely abuſed? That men with this cloak, would cover their villainies? Their conduct is extremely fooliſh and deſperately wicked.

Once more, I may mention, as deſcriptive of the wicked, that they are impatient of reſtraint and reproof. They cannot bear to be checked in their mad career of ſin and folly; and the faithful reprover, if ſuch be found, is hated and avoided. The very ſight and example of the godly is a ſecret reproof to the wicked; it is a contraſt to their own conduct; gives them diſagreeable feelings; and, therefore, they ſtrive to be out of the way. Sometimes they are ſo bold as to expoſe, in a ludicrous manner, every appearance of ſincerity; and laugh and jeſt merely to keep themſelves in countenance.

The preacher who ſeeks to ſave himſelf and them that hear him, by telling them plainly of their ſins, and denouncing the judgments of God, is thought rigid and ſevere. Ahab, the king of Iſrael, ſaid of Micaiah, the ſon of Imla, *I hate him, for he never propheſieth good unto me, but always evil.* The diſcourſe which flows ſmooth and even, dwelling on generals, not directed to the conſcience, nor ſinners purſued in it by the terrors of the Lord, is moſt applauded. It is related as fact of a preacher, who had arrived at ſo great perfection in adapting himſelf to delicate ears, that he once told his hearers, "If they did not vouchſafe to give a new

turn to their lives, they would go to a place he did not chooſe to name in ſo courtly an audience." It is no breach of charity to ſay, that ſuch preachers and their hearers are in danger of going down to hell, and enduring never-ceaſing torments, of which, we ſhould now often hear and think, that ſo we may be excited to lay hold upon the hope ſet before us. If danger is not known, how ſhall it be ſhunned? We do not preach you *to*, but *from* theſe everlaſting burnings. If our own hearts do not condemn us, why ſhould we fear? If they do, O! what madneſs to ſhut our eyes, and wander heedleſsly on! Will this make the danger leſs? What fearfulneſs muſt ſeize ſuch, when they come to ſtand on the brink of the awful pit!

That there is an improper method of reproving ſinners, is certain; a method, tending more to diſguſt than edify even pious ears. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.* There are many deſcriptions of Heaven and Hell to no purpoſe, or worſe. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man,* the one or the other. The joys of the one, and the terrors of the other, are beſt repreſented in the language of ſacred writ. Beſides, *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword;* and is that inſtrument by which, in his diſpenſation of grace, he *wounds* and he *heals*.

SERMON XV.

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF THE WICKED.

BY

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ISAIAH lvii. 21.

There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.

HAVING endeavored, in a former diſcourſe, ſo to deſcribe the wicked, as that we might be aſſiſted in forming a judgment of ourſelves, I proceed now to ſhow,

II. In what reſpects there is no peace to ſuch.

Firſt, There is no peace to them with God. By their wickedneſs they wage war with Heaven; and the Almighty King is angry with them every day. Man, hearkening to the ſuggeſtions of Satan, has thrown off allegiance to his rightful owner, tranſgreſſed his holy law, refuſed that tribute of praiſe which is due, and engaged in open rebellion. Whatever we may think of the claims of fellow-mortals, ſurely the great God hath an unqueſtion-

able right to us and all our ſervice. He hath made, and continually upholds us. Of him we cannot be independent; and our happineſs lies in his favor. Having ruined ourſelves, he found out a help. He ſent his Son to fulfil the demands of the law in our room, and in his goſpel he proclaims pardon and peace to all who will return. Only they have reconciliation with him, who have ſubmitted to his terms; who, forſaking their ſins, have believed in the name of his Son. The impenitent and unbelieving muſt fall under the ſtroke of his juſtice. To their rebellion they add ingratitude, by making light of the offers of grace.

Having no peace with God, of what advantage are the moſt flattering circumſtances in this world? Of what advantage that we are the citizens of a free ſtate, and the nations around in league with us? Theſe indeed are ineſtimable bleſſings, and which we muſt not tamely ſurrender to every proud and ambitious ſpirit; but can they make us happy hereafter? We may not enjoy them a day, or an hour. While we continue under the power of ſin, we are the moſt abject ſlaves. We do the works of the devil, who delights in the ruin and miſery of our race.—Is not the diſpleaſure of our Maker enough to embitter every comfort, or render us joyleſs in the midſt of every earthly good thing? How dreadful to think, that his curſe is upon us when we lie down and riſe up; and in all our ways! How fearful to know, that we muſt fall, at laſt into the hands of the living God! This is

the pitiable condition of the wicked, to whom,

In the ſecond place, There is no peace in their own conſciences. The thoughts of what their crimes have expoſed them to, often tear them with the moſt bitter reflections. Some of them have been afraid to be left alone; and diſmal ſpectres, which guilt formed, have haunted them in the midnight hours. It is ſaid of the infidel Hobbes, "that though he would ſpeak very ſtrange and unbecoming things of God, yet in his ſtudy, in the dark, and in his retired thoughts, he trembled before him. If his candle happened to go out in the night, he awoke in terror and amazement. He was unable to bear the diſmal reflections of his dark and deſolate mind; and knew not how to extinguiſh, nor how to bear the light of *the candle of the Lord* within him."

See the man of pleaſure, how gaily he walks abroad! What cheerfulneſs in his looks! He affects to eſteem the more ſober part of mankind as preciſe and ſupercilious! Talk to him of conſcience, and he hardly reſtrains a burſt of laughter! Did you ſee him in ſome hour of ſickneſs, gloom and ſolitude, you might find diſtreſs pictured in his face, ariſing from remorſe within. Though repeated acts of ſin ſear the conſcience, and render it leſs ſenſible, yet there are few but have their ſevere twinges and repenting ſeaſons. It is eaſier to proſtitute conſcience than to ſilence it.—"Whatever there be in the air, there is certainly

an elaſtic power in conſcience that will bear itſelf up, notwithſtanding the weight that is laid upon it to ſtifle and kill its clamors." Dr. Doddridge, in his life of that memorable convert, Col. Gardiner, informs us, "That ſtill the checks of conſcience, and ſome remaining principles of ſo good an education as he had received, would break in upon his moſt licentious hours; and that he told him, when ſome of his diſſolute companions were once congratulating him on his diſtinguiſhed felicity, a dog happening at that time to come into the room, he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and ſaying to himſelf, "Oh, that I were that dog!" Such was then his happineſs; and ſuch perhaps is that of hundreds more, who bear themſelves higheſt in the contempt of religion, and glory in that infamous ſervitude which they call liberty.

If the conſcience of the wicked be eaſy, it muſt be in one or more of theſe ways; either by a long courſe of iniquity; or by adopting falſe principles; or by a compariſon with others who are thought worſe; or by reſolving to amend in future; or by performing part of the duties of religion. Wo to thoſe who are able to quiet it by any of them. It will ſome time or other awake to their ſorrow. Like a frozen viper laid to the fire, it will recover ſtrength, and ſting them to the heart. Take them in their moſt compoſed frame, how far are they from that ſerenity of ſoul which religion gives. This is a *peace which paſſeth all underſtanding*. The minds of the wicked are reſtleſs, and hurried by

their luſts and paſſions. In the verſe preceding the text, it is ſaid, *The wicked are like the troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt:* But in the godly ſoul there is a calm. The contemplation of heavenly things affords complacency; and in God, the ſoul can hope and reſt for time and eternity. *Peace*, ſaid Chriſt to his diſciples, *I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* With this peace, what earthly bleſſing can be compared? Could we command every thing our hearts would wiſh, where is the enjoyment, if the mind be diſquieted? This, like an aching tooth, or a bone out of joint, will diſturb us, will break our ſleep, and render us unhappy.

Perhaps ſome may think, that only atrocious ſinners are ſubject to ſuch ſevere laſhes. Generally it is ſo; but every perſon eſtranged from God is deſtitute of ſolid and laſting peace. It is owing to ignorance and miſtake, that he has any at all. There are no ſins ſmall, conſidered with reſpect to God. It is found ſo in a thorough conviction; and their being committed againſt the light and grace of the goſpel, highly aggravates them, and is a bitter ingredient to all true penitents. Our hearts condemn us for ſecret as well as for open ſins; for omiſſions as well as tranſgreſſions. Unleſs then, conſcience is unduly huſhed, it cannot otherwiſe than moleſt all who are not reconciled to God.

Again, There is no peace to the wicked in a dying hour. By this is not meant that they ſhall undergo more pain of body than others. The pangs of diſſolution are the ſame to all. Thoſe indeed, of whom the world was not worthy, have often ſuffered the moſt cruel and violent deaths. Nor is it meant, that the wicked have never any compoſure in death, or hope of well-being hereafter:—For though the ſcripture tells us, *The wicked is driven away in his wickedneſs; but the righteous hath hope in his death*; yet we are not to underſtand, that none of them ever entertain, in that ſolemn hour, expectations of mercy, or that they all anticipate their miſery. Some of them die as they had lived, ſtupid and thoughtleſs as beaſts. Beſides, I know not that death ſhakes every falſe hope. It is thought that ſome good men may have fears and perplexities to the very laſt; and that ſome bad men, may remain unſhaken, and die with more apparent confidence than the others. There are inſtances of infidels maintaining cheerfulneſs and reſolution in their laſt moments. With ſome it has been otherwiſe, and they have betrayed dreadful forebodings of a wrath to come. Now and then they have retracted their principles, and ſought relief in a profeſſion of Chriſtianity. It is ſaid, that the poet Dryden, not being able to fortify himſelf in infidelity, embraced the Popiſh religion. Some years ago it was confidently aſſerted, that Voltaire, at the age of eighty, and being, as he thought, about to die, had felt ſome ſtrange

qualms of conſcience, in conſequence of which, he had made a long and goodly confeſſion of the truths of revelation. His followers deem this a ſlander, and cannot believe that their mighty champion would ever retreat. Having ſo long edified them by his writings, perhaps there is no ſufficient authority to deprive them of their comfort in his death.

The fears of the good man cannot render his ſtate leſs ſafe, nor the confidence of the bad, render his leſs dangerous. Whatever their own ſentiments are, *it ſhall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.* We are, however, compaſſed about with a cloud of witneſſes, who bear teſtimony that the end of the perfect and upright man, is peace; who have died, not only with calmneſs and reſignation, but have been filled with a joy unſpeakable and full of glory; who have met death, not only on a bed ſurrounded by friends, but in its moſt horrid form, on a gibbet, or at a ſtake; not only thoſe of ſtrong and fearleſs make, but thoſe of a timorous nature, and from among the weaker ſex; not only thoſe who had no attachment on earth why to wiſh for life, but thoſe who had eſtates, families and friends. It is an obſervation made, to ſhow the efficacy of grace, that, in ſuffering times, none went more cheerfully to martyrdom, than thoſe who had numerous families dependant on them. Let the decriers of religion produce us any principle ſo powerful to bear one up, under the diſtreſſes of life, and ſupport

through the valley of the ſhadow of death; any thing that will ſo revive and embolden the ſoul, as a view of God reconciled in Chriſt, and the hopes of a bleſſed immortality. No; it is only this will diſarm death of his ſting. It is this will make death not only tolerable, but deſirable; will give not only compoſure, but triumph; not only free us from pain, but make heaven beam all around us.

Dr. Young, in his tract on original compoſition, has given us a precious anecdote of the amiable Mr. Addiſon. "After he had diſmiſſed his phyſicians, and all hopes of life, he ſent for a youth nearly related to him, and finely accompliſhed, yet not above being the better for good inſtructions from a dying friend. He came—but life now glimmering in the ſocket, the dying friend was ſilent. After a decent and proper pauſe, the youth ſaid, "Dear ſir, you ſent for me; I believe and I hope that you have ſome commands; I ſhall hold them moſt ſacred." May diſtant ages not only hear, but feel the reply! Forcibly graſping the young gentleman's hand, he ſoftly ſaid, "See in what peace a Chriſtian can die!"—He ſpoke with difficulty, and ſoon expired." I the rather adduce this inſtance, becauſe he was a man of genius, of great literary fame, and in high ſtation, with which empty ſmatterers and conceited fools, are ready to think religion inconſiſtent. Indeed, the men of greateſt talents, who ever adorned our world, where not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt;

among whom we may rank a Locke, a Boyle, a Newton, and a Bacon. Perhaps it might be aſſerted, without extravagance, that theſe, for ſtrength of mind, and deep reſearch, as far exceeded many of the retailers of infidelity as an angel did them; or as an untutored ſavage exceeds the beaſts below him. They were the glory of Britain, and one half her fame.

What awful ſpectacles have ſome of the wicked exhibited on a death bed! How contrary to the example juſt now adduced! Hell ſeemed already to have been kindled in their ſouls. Under the ſcourges of a guilty conſcience, and a fearful ſenſe of impending wrath, they could not contain, but vented their diſmal outcry enough to rend the ſtouteſt heart. One, of whom mention is made in a practical writer, "a monument of juſtice, worn to ſkin and bone, blaſphemed the God of Heaven, curſed himſelf, and continually cried, O torture! torture! torture! O torture, torture!" Another is ſaid to have cried out, "I have had a little pleaſure, but now I muſt have Hell for ever more. To whatever was ſpoken, to afford him comfort, he replied, I muſt to Hell; I muſt to the furnaces of Hell for millions of millions of ages." The repetition of theſe expreſſions is frightful; how much more to have ſeen the ſad objects! Suffer me to ſay, with the greateſt ſerioufneſs and affection, that no ſinner who goes on againſt his conſcience can expect to die in another manner. Let not the

fright of theſe examples freeze the blood and make the hair ſtand an end only, but ſo impreſs our minds as to deter us from all the paths of known ſin. Should we fall blindfold into deſtruction, it will not be leſs terrible in the iſſue. It muſt be grievous and diſtracting to think of appearing before God without ſome ſure and firm hope. To have our peace to make when the body is racked with ſore pain, when refreſhing ſleep has departed, and we know not when the pulſe may ceaſe, and we ſtiffen into cold clay—how affecting, and alas, what proſpect that the mighty work ſhall be done, when years of health and ſtrength have been ſinned away! I leave this mournful theme; but for one more mournful ſtill; there is,

In the laſt place, No peace to the wicked after death. Then their ſorrows begin, which admit of no alleviation. In this world they had their good things: They enjoyed with others the common bounties of Providence, and were ſenſible of pleaſure. In theſe they placed their only happineſs; but now all is gone, and they are tormented. Conſcience can be quieted no more. It is the worm that never dies. Inſtead of hope, eternal deſpair covers them round, and they are preſſed under the wrath of a juſt and ſovereign judge. Before the body is conveyed to its cold lodging by ſurviving friends, the immortal ſpirit is ſentenced and confined to that diſmal dungeon which juſtice hath prepared for all the rebellious; where are,

" Regions of ſorrow, doleful ſhades, where peace
And reſt can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning ſulphur unconſumed.
—— Here their priſon ordained
In utter darkneſs, and their portion ſet,
As far removed from God and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmoſt pole."†

Who is able to deſcribe their miſery? Who knows the power and vengeance of Almighty God? Future puniſhment is repreſented in ſcripture by the *worm that never dies*, by *everlaſting fire*, by a *lake of fire and brimſtone*, and by every thing terrible in nature.

That there will be degrees of miſery our Saviour has taught us, when he ſays, that it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Chorazin, Bethſaida and Capernaum, in the day of judgment, becauſe theſe enjoyed ſuperior advantages to the others. Theſe words alſo teach the ſame: *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light.* It ſhall be more tolerable for the heathen world, than for thoſe under the goſpel. Wickedneſs indeed grows to a greater height among the latter. Would you find the moſt daring and abandoned ſinner? Look not for him among the Indian tribes, but among profeſ-

† Milton's Paradiſe Loſt. Book I.

fing Chriſtians.—Nothing can exceed the anguiſh ariſing from the reflection of having ſlighted offered mercy. This is a miſery from which the devils themſelves will be exempted. To them no Saviour has been revealed, nor pardon offered. Skilled in the art of torment, they will increaſe the anguiſh of our race by inſulting their folly. The body having been a partner in guilt, will be raiſed, reunited to the ſoul, and both made unſpeakably miſerable. Our Saviour concludes his awful repreſentation of the day of judgment, by ſaying, *Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment.*

The character and miſery of the wicked having been now ſet before us, ſurely it becomes us to make careful and ſerious application of theſe truths.

We ſee the unhappy condition of ſuch, notwithſtanding our political war is turned into peace. To rejoice in it, moſt certainly they ought, but by no means to view it as an evidence that God is pleaſed with them. Without repentance, they are only reſerved for ſeverer judgments. The diſpenſations of Providence towards mankind in this world are various, and all deſigned to bring them to a ſenſe of themſelves, and an acknowledgment of the living and true God. He tries us now with affliction, and then with mercy, or he mixes the cup. They who *harden their necks ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.* They who have felt the diſtreſſes of the war, and have not wept for

their ſins; thoſe who have loſt their eſtates, and have not made peace with God, have reaſon more than ever to fear. There is yet no peace to them. They are not immediately threatened, it is true, with an invading army, or called to change domeſtic bliſs for the hurry of a camp, and jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. They no longer tremble for dear relatives, and ſigh for life, liberty and property at ſtake, but they lie under the diſpleaſure of that Almighty Being, who diſpoſes of them and all their concerns. He hath other ways to puniſh them even in this world; and they ſhall not eſcape his righteous judgment in the world to come. What are all the ſcenes of terror and confuſion we can witneſs here, compared to that place, where ſhall be continual *weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.*

Is it not then of the utmoſt importance, that we examine whether or not we are numbered with the wicked? If ever we would obtain mercy of God in Chriſt, we muſt firſt be acquainted with our own condition. As ſome diſorders are of the moſt deadly nature, in which the patients are ſtupid and inſenſible of pain, ſo a ſinner not knowing himſelf to be ſuch, and unconcerned affords but little ground of hope.—Are any of you living in ignorance of divine truths, ſeldom thinking or caring about them? Are you guilty of great immoralities, ſecret or open? Do you live in the omiſſion of poſitive and known duty? How then can you hope that your ſtate is good and ſafe? Your

ſtate is, beyond all doubt, bad and dangerous.—Believe it to be ſo, and labor after repentance and amendment.—Neither will a life faultleſs in the eyes of men, and a regular attendance on outward duties, prove you the ſubjects of ſupernatural grace. He is a Chriſtian who is one inwardly. The ſeat of piety is the heart. If you believe the doctrine of man's depravity and inability, you muſt, in connection, believe the neceſſity of being created anew in Chriſt Jeſus. As is the tree, ſo is the fruit: As is the fountain, ſo are the ſtreams. Have you then paſſed from death to life? There is no medium. Either you have been changed, or you are, at this day, *in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity*. Hear the words of him who came down from Heaven to teach us the way of life: *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God*. Alas, that too many, like Nicodemus, think this a ſtrange and unintelligible doctrine. They alledge that nothing more is neceſſary than thoſe endeavors and deſires which are in their own power. They feel no need of the influences of the holy ſpirit. O Religion, myſterious in thy nature, giving glory to God and debaſing the creature, may we never miſtake thee, our eternal concern! Bleſſed God, diſpel the darkneſs of our minds; give us to know thee; and what we ourſelves are, and lead us in the way everlaſting!

Our deceitful hearts are too apt to impoſe upon us, and our adverſary the devil, is ever ſeeking

whom he may devour. The moſt wicked perſon flatters himſelf that he will ſome time or other mend, or preſumes on the mercy of God.—Let us try to make a thorough work of religion. Many, who were *not far from the kingdom of Heaven*, will never arrive there. The formaliſt muſt loſe his ſoul after all his pains. He needs the new heart, to turn his drudgery into a willing ſervice, and make him happy for ever. The hypocrite, if renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, will not act the player, or aſſume a borrowed character; but he will really be, what he appears to be. How vain are all pretences! It is eaſy to deceive fellowmen; but God, with whom we have to do, ſearches the heart and tries the reins. What we are in ſecret, when none but his eye ſees us, will determine our true character.

Sinners, of whatever deſcription, open your eyes on your wretchedneſs! Flattery in your caſe, would be poiſon. To hide your danger, or ſmooth it over, would be monſtrous cruelty. Do you aſk, is there no hope concerning us? None, while you continue in ſin. There is no ſuch ſalvation in all the ſcriptures. If you are reſolved and permitted to go on in a courſe of iniquity till the end of life, you are condemned already. *The wages of ſin is death.* Nothing but the ſlight union of ſoul and body, prevents the flames of hell from kindling all around you. On this precarious tenure you hold any eaſe and peace you have. A few days ſickneſs may end all your joy for ever; a ſickneſs

in which you may be inſenſible, and can no more attend to the ſalvation of the ſoul, than one already in the grave; nay, an accident may precipitate you into everlaſting burnings. You now live, and have health and reaſon. If you will leave your ſins, there is an ample remedy provided for you in the goſpel. There is ſalvation for the worſt of you; for all of you. O delay not, but break off your ſins by righteouſneſs. Be importunate in prayer to God. Bring your polluted ſoul and body to the blood of Chriſt, which *cleanſeth from all ſin*.—Now is your day of grace; ſin it not away. The moments are on the wing.—Improve them before they are fled, and you go down to the duſt.

You, my brethren, who have your peace made with God, are happy indeed. I congratulate you on the peace reſtored to our land; but I congratulate you much more on this. By the one, the calamities of war are removed, and days of eaſe and reſt are come; by the other, you have eſcaped calamities without end, and have found eaſe and reſt to your ſouls. By the one, you are freed from the oppreſſive yoke of men; by the other, from the vileſt ſlavery of ſin and ſatan. By the one, you have proſpects of a growing and extenſive empire; by the other, aſſurance of reigning for ever and ever. You are doubly bleſt. Peace without, and peace within. Peace here, and peace hereafter. You muſt not, however, put off the harneſs. In your ſpiritual concerns, much remains yet to be done. This warfare is not over. Sin and ſatan,

though wounded, are not dead; though ſorely beaten, they keep the field. Hoſtilities may ceaſe, but they will be renewed. It is your duty, therefore, to watch, and to put on the whole armour of God. You have the greateſt encouragement to ſtand your ground. You will prove ſucceſsful, through the ſtrength of your leader. Jeſus Chriſt will make you, at laſt, more than conquerors.

Exert all your talents, and uſe all your influence, to promote the declarative glory of God, and the ſalvation of men. Diſcountenance, and, as far as in your power, prevent idleneſs of every kind, exceſs and profanity, ſo diſpleaſing to God, and deſtructive to free and popular governments. We have been brave, and if virtuous, we will be a happy people.

I conclude this diſcourſe with addreſſing, once more, thoſe of my audience, who may be ſenſible that they have no peace with God. It were eaſy to multiply arguments, why you ſhould return to God; but none will prevail unleſs he make them effectual. I have endeavored to deal plainly and faithfully with you, as knowing that I muſt give an account. It would be improper to preach my ſoul away in a ſmooth and moral harangue. Your own good ſenſe would condemn me for it now, and riſe up in judgment againſt me in the day of the Lord. Have you formed any reſolutions, that you will try to be religious? Begin and perſevere. You have the greateſt encouragement. Let neither the number, nor the aggravation of your

crimes, deter you from an application to the Saviour. On the contrary, if ſin be your choice, there is no encouragement. How do you know that God will not leave you to yourſelves, to fill up the meaſure of your iniquity? How do you know that he will not ſpeedily require your ſouls? Let not a moment then paſs without reſolving to ſerve God. Why halt you between two opinions? Reaſon and conſcience ſay, that you ought to be religious. Follow their wiſe and ſovereign dictate. What pretences does ſin bring? She puts on a ſpecious appearance to deceive and ruin. Hearken not to her ſong, for ſhe would entice you to your own deſtruction. In the end, ſhe will bite like a ſerpent, and ſting like an adder. She rewards all her votaries with unutterable wo and pain. But religion holds out to you every thing good and great. She will perfect and make happy your nature. Through Jeſus Chriſt you may obtain peace with God, and with your own conſciences; peace in death and throughout eternity. Why will you not, this day, accept and ſign the peace through this Mediator? This would give you a true reliſh for all the gifts of Providence. Then might you *ſit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none make you afraid.* May God teach us all our true intereſt; long continue our national peace; and above all, give us peace with himſelf, and make us happy, when thrones ſhall be caſt down; through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father, and the bleſſed Spirit, one God, be glory now and for ever more.

SERMON XVI.

ON DISOBEDIENCE.

BY

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GENESIS iii. 6.

And when the woman ſaw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and a tree to be deſired to make one wiſe; ſhe took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave alſo unto her huſband with her, and he did eat.

HOWEVER inſignificant this tranſaction may, at firſt view, appear, its conſequences have been very deplorable to all mankind. Man was originally created in the image of God, and the habitation aſſigned him by his Creator, was abundantly ſupplied with all the means of felicity. He poſſeſſed, in Paradiſe, whatever was neceſſary to render his *preſent* exiſtence happy; and, in the midſt of the garden was placed the *tree of life*, as a ſymbol and pledge of his immortality, if he continued obedient to the commands of his God. He was indulged in the free enjoyment of all the bleſſings that ſurrounded him, excepting only that he

was laid under one particular reſtriction, not to taſte of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But, ſeduced by the temptation of Satan, our firſt parents violated the divine command. Walking by *ſight*, and not by *faith;* truſting more to the ſuggeſtions of their own appetites, than to the declarations of their Creator; graſping at what appeared a preſent good, though apprized of the dangerous conſequence; when they ſaw that the tree was pleaſant to the eyes, and vainly imagined that it was good for food; they ſtretched forth their hands and took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, to their own wretchedneſs and that of their poſterity. For by this violation of the divine law, the covenant between God and man was broken; the right to the tree of life, the pledge of immortality was forfeited, ſin gained admiſſion into the world, and miſery and death followed his footſteps. In that evil hour, nature, from her ſeat, ſighing through all her works, gave ſigns of wo, that all was loſt.

This very intereſting event well deſerves the ſerious conſideration of every Chriſtian; for in its conſequences are involved all the poſterity of Adam. Upon this event is founded the whole ſcheme of the redemption of the world by the Son of God, in the voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs. Had not man fallen from his original rectitude, there would have been no neceſſity for a Redeemer. To remedy the ſad effects of this original tranſgreſſion, the promiſe was immediately

given, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.* Let us then conſider what inferences may be drawn from this paſſage of ſacred ſcripture, which may tend either to confirm our *faith*, or to direct our *practice*.

And, in the *firſt place*, hence we may learn, that God has a right to try our obedience in any manner which may ſeem beſt to his infinite wiſdom, notwithſtanding the difficulties and ſeeming inconſiſtences which may be ſuggeſted by our imperfect apprehenſion of things. Is it enquired? Indeed, the queſtion has been often put by ſcoffing infidelity—"Why ſhould a divine command be given with reſpect to ſo trifling a circumſtance, as that of taſting the fruit of a particular tree?" The ſole intention of the Almighty Creator was to prove the fidelity and ſubmiſſion of his rational creatures; and why not in this circumſtance, as well as in any other? Such was the ſituation of our firſt parents in their primitive ſtate, that the laws which were enjoined them muſt neceſſarily have been few and ſimple. Moſt of thoſe injunctions would have been totally inapplicable to *their* condition, which were afterwards laid upon mankind, when the human race was multiplied; when a diviſion of property had taken place; and extenſive civil ſocieties were formed. If the command was plain and ſimple, tranſgreſſion was the more eaſily to be avoided. Although the prohibition related to a matter, which would otherwiſe have been altogether indifferent; it was entirely adequate to

the intended purpoſe, which was to prove the faith and humility of the rational creatures whom God had formed. *Their* trial, like that of every other perſon, was, to ſee whether they would ſeek for happineſs only in compliance with the divine command, or whether they would endeavor to obtain it, in ſome other way. And upon this principle, that particular tree which was the ſubject of the prohibition, is with propriety denominated *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*; as it was intended to ſignify to thoſe who taſted the fruit thereof, the *good* of entire ſubmiſſion, and the *evil* of wilful diſobedience to the command of God. From theſe conſiderations, let not us preſume to diſpenſe with any of the injunctions of the Almighty, however inſignificant they may appear to our limited underſtandings. Some duties ariſe from the natural and neceſſary relations of things; and ſome alſo, from the immediate appointment of the great Creator and Lord of the Univerſe. From this latter ſource, the ceremonial laws of the Moſaic diſpenſation derived all their authority; and, on the ſame account, *we Chriſtians* are obligated to ſubmit to the *poſitive inſtitutions* of the goſpel. The will of God, in whatever manner it may be ſignified to mankind, is the unerring and indiſpenſible rule of human conduct.

Secondly, Hence we may be led to obſerve the diſtinct offices of *reaſon* and *faith*, in the great concerns of religion. Let enthuſiaſts endeavor to depreciate reaſon, becauſe it muſt ever prove un-

friendly to their extravagant pretenſions—let unbelievers exceſſively extol its powers, becauſe they are deſirous entirely to diſcard revelation—the diſcreet Chriſtian will never attempt to ſeparate what God has indiſſolubly united. He will make his reaſon and his faith mutually aſſiſt each other. The beautiful edifice of his religion will be founded in *reaſon*, and the ſuperſtructure will be reared on high by *faith*; and all the ſacred duties performed in this glorious temple of the Lord, may be juſtly denominated a *reaſonable ſervice*. *Reaſon* is the diſtinguiſhing glory of man. From this heavenly ingredient in his compoſition, it is ſaid, that he was created in the *image of God*. This is the candle of the Lord ſhining before us to direct our progreſs. This is the celeſtial light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. But let us ever remember, that the rays of this glorious luminary are circumſcribed within certain limits. This heavenly guide can conduct us only through a part of our journey; and then, ſhe voluntarily gives us up to the guidance of faith. It is, therefore, a matter of infinite importance to us, when reaſon ſtops; to be ſatisfied and willing that faith ſhould take us by the hand. Happy would it have been for our firſt parents, had they acted from a ſtedfaſt conviction of this momentous truth. God had vouchſafed to converſe with them under ſome viſible form; and his command was communicated in ſuch a manner, that they entertained not the leaſt doubt of its divine authority,

Reaſon herſelf, therefore, ought to have taught them, not to cavil, but implicitly to obey. Has God expreſsly declared, *Thou ſhalt not eat?* Every contradictory aſſertion is, therefore, not to be attended to. Impertinent and preſumptuous are all thy imaginations, "that thou mayeſt taſte the forbidden fruit, not only without danger, but even with pleaſure and advantage—that its beautiful appearance indicates ſome ſalutary quality within; that ſurely it is good for food, and much to be deſired to make one wiſe." The event proved, that the higheſt wiſdom of man is to ſubmit to the directions of Almighty God—that miſery is the natural conſequence of tranſgreſſing the law.

Theſe obſervations are altogether applicable to the preſent ſituation of Chriſtians. Our religion requires the exerciſe of both reaſon and faith. She comes with high pretenſions—ſhe ſhrinks not from the cloſeſt inſpection—ſhe demands the attention which is due to a divine revelation. Let reaſon examine theſe pretenſions, and weigh the arguments which are adduced to eſtabliſh ſuch high authority; for, in ſo doing, reaſon acts within her proper ſphere. And if ſhe at length determine, that our religion comes from God, then let us receive it with cordial affection, and reſign ourſelves, without reſerve, to its Heavenly direction. Does reaſon indeed conclude that Chriſtianity is of celeſtial origin? Does reaſon declare that God is wiſer than man? Let us then call in the aid of *faith*. Let us believe the aſſertions of

God, though we cannot always perfectly comprehend them. Let us be obedient to his injunctions, though we cannot always explain the mode of their operation in producing the intended effect. Upon this principle let us ſtedfaſtly maintain the doctrines of the exiſtence of *three perſons* in the unity of the divine nature; of the *incarnation* of the Son of God; and of the *atonement* which he offered for the ſins of the world. Let us heartily believe and act upon that perſuaſion, that the due reception of the ſacraments, though they are but mere *matter*, will, nevertheleſs, (by the efficacy of the divine appointment) have a *ſpiritual* effect in promoting the purity, and thus ſecuring the ſalvation, of our immortal ſouls. Let us walk by *faith*, and not by *ſight*; and this divine principle will be unto us *the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.*

Thirdly, From this paſſage of ſacred ſcripture we may obſerve, that ſince the *will of God* is the indiſpenſible rule of human conduct, whenever *his* commands are clearly notified, we are not preſumptuouſly to diſtinguiſh them, as if ſome were trifling, while others are important; as if ſome of them deſerved regard, while others may be tranſgreſſed with impunity. So far as the infirmity of our nature will permit, we muſt endeavor to yield a perfect obedience to *all* the laws of God. *Theſe*, no doubt, with reſpect to their influence upon human happineſs, are of more or leſs importance; but ſtill, in regard to the authority from which

they are derived, they all deſerve the ſame reſpect. Hence, the declaration of the apoſtle is undoubtedly juſt; *that whoſoever keepeth the whole law, and offendeth,* (that is, *wilfully* offendeth) *only in one point, he is guilty of all.*—He deſpiſes that authority upon which the whole law is founded. In their treatment of each other, our firſt parents violated no duty, they lived in mutual affection, and, in the taſk that was aſſigned them, yielded reciprocal aſſiſtance. And, with reſpect to their devotional temper of mind, it is probable the language of the poet is as true, as it is beautiful—

> Their oriſons were each morning duly paid
> In various ſtyle; for neither various ſtyle
> Nor holy rapture wanted they, to praiſe
> Their Maker,
> Whoſe *goodneſs* is beyond tho't and *power* divine.

Conſtant as they were in the diſcharge of theſe *important* duties, it were well if they had attended to the *leſſer* matters of the law. Satan did not dare to inſinuate, that God was not to be adored, or that they were not to love each other. But he artfully ſuggeſted, that the taſting of the fruit of a particular tree, could not be a tranſgreſſion of ſuch frightful magnitude; could not poſſibly be attended with ſuch dreadful conſequences. That he is a liar from the beginning, the fatal event ſufficiently proved; and it now concerns us to be cautious, leſt we ſhould be ſeduced into tranſgreſſion by ſimilar falſe ſuggeſtions. Say not, that

becauſe you injure no man by direct injuſtice, you may venture to indulge in rioting and drunkenneſs, which are ſuppoſed to be injurious to no one but yourſelf; for God has commanded us to be temperate in all things, and has introduced *drunkenneſs* into the ſame dreadful catalogue of vices, with adultery and murder. Say not, that becauſe you obſerve all the weightier matters of the law, duties which are of everlaſting obligation, you may, without hazard, neglect the poſitive inſtitutions of the goſpel—that *baptiſm* is of no avail to ſalvation —and that the *Lord's ſupper* is a ceremony of little ſignificance. The proper inquiry is, "Has God commanded the obſervance of them?" If this be the caſe, it is our duty with humility to ſubmit, and not arrogantly pretend to aſſign reaſons to juſtify our diſobedience. He that would avoid the great offence, muſt reſolutely withſtand the firſt beginnings of evil. He that would yield an acceptable obedience, muſt preſent his tithes of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, as well as obſerve the more weighty precepts of the law. An apparently trifling tranſgreſſion, may be productive of very ſerious conſequences; a ſeeming unimportant duty may be highly acceptable in the ſight of *him* who enjoined it. Let us implicitly *obey*, and then we may ſafely truſt the event to God, who is ſupremely wiſe, and powerful, and good.

Fourthly, In diſcourſing upon this ſubject, it may be farther obſerved, that the very foundation and groundwork of all true religion muſt be laid

in an humble and docile diſpoſition of heart. It was pride that thruſt down the revolting Angels from their firſt abodes in the manſions of glory. It was a vain confidence in their own powers which expelled Adam and Eve from all the joys of Paradiſe. *Except ye be converted, ſays our Lord, and become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Now the prevailing diſpoſition of children is docility of mind; and a readineſs to give themſelves up to the guidance of thoſe, whoſe goodneſs they have experienced; and who, they know, are wiſer than themſelves. Deſtitute of this diſpoſition, the Phariſees blaſphemed the Son of God, and deſpiſed his doctrines; and, on the ſame account, the reaſoning Philoſophers of the preſent day vilify the goſpel of Chriſt, becauſe they cannot comprehend all its myſteries. But, is the human underſtanding a perfect ſtandard of all wiſdom; an adequate judge of all truth? Is there nothing true which lies beyond the limits of our comprehenſion? We cannot preſume to aſſert it; for, in the ſtrong language of ſcripture, it may be juſtly affirmed, *the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than man, and the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than man.* All nature is full of inexplicable myſteries; and before vain philoſophy rejects the goſpel, becauſe ſome myſterious doctrines are therein inculcated, it ought to explain the ſecret proceſs by which fluid water is converted into ſolid ice; or how every blade of graſs is induced to ſpring *upwards*, contrary to a general law of nature. Ignorance and

arrogance frequently go together: but the tendency of true wiſdom is ever to make us humble. With God, nothing, that does not imply direct abſurdity or wickedneſs, is impoſſible. When Samaria was cloſely beſieged, and reduced to the laſt extremity by famine, Eliſha, the man of God, came forth and proclaimed in the audience of all the people, *thus ſaith the Lord, to-morrow about this time, ſhall a meaſure of fine flour be ſold for a ſheckel, and two meaſures of barley for a ſheckel, in the gates of Samaria.* But a Lord, on whoſe hand the king leaned, in the true ſpirit of captious infidelity, anſwered the man of God, and ſaid, *behold, if the Lord would make windows in Heaven, might this thing be?* And yet, the event ſhowed, that the man of God was right, and that the objections of the impious caviller were frivolous and vain. *Let imaginations be caſt down, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God; and let every thought be brought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt;* and we ſhall find, in due time, that in believing the doctrines of the goſpel, *we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables;* that what God hath promiſed, he is alſo able to perform.

For, to our great conſolation, it may be obſerved, in the *laſt place*, that in the redemption which was wrought out by the Son of God, ſufficient proviſion is made to remedy all the ſad effects of this *original tranſgreſſion.* In the fulneſs of time, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, to accompliſh the promiſe given to our firſt parents in Paradiſe.

The great work of redemption is now completed; and we are continually invited, nay, even commanded, to come and partake of its benefits. Through hearty *faith*, and ſincere though imperfect *obedience*, compenſation may be amply obtained for the loſs of the *tree of life;* for death has been vanquiſhed, and immortality is again brought to light in the goſpel. Let me conclude with exhorting you, to acquieſce in the wiſdom of divine Providence, in whatever manner God may think it proper to try and prove you, in this mortal life—to cultivate aſſiduouſly the powers of reaſon, as the diſtinguiſhing gift of God, and the greateſt glory of man; and reaſon, under proper management, will become the affectionate handmaid of faith—to take without reluctance, the *will of God* for the guide of your lives, and it will undoubtedly lead you to happineſs and glory—to walk before him with all lowlineſs and meekneſs of heart, for he who thus humbleth himſelf will be glorioufly exalted—to let the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life animate your obedience and enliven all your proſpects. Paſſing, in this manner, through things temporal, you will finally loſe not the things eternal; for there remaineth a never-ceaſing reſt for the people of God.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE FORGETFULNESS OF OUR SINS.

BY

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HOSEA vii. 2.

And they conſider not in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedneſs.

IT is a melancholy thought that there are ſome people, perhaps a great many, who are without the conſideration mentioned in the text; that do not conſider that the Lord remembers all their wickedneſs.

If a man does a known injury to his neighbor, he is very apt to think *he* remembers it. But he may offend God from time to time, and not conſider that *he* can remember too. This is an affecting thought, both with reſpect to ourſelves and others. When we obſerve this careleſſneſs in others about offending God, and an indifferency, whether he takes notice of it or not; we may wonder and pity their inattention, as we do when

we ſee a great careleſſneſs in people, who ſquander away their eſtate without thought, or run greatly in debt, or are negligent of their health, expoſing it by intemperance or other folly. But when we bring the caſe home to ourſelves, and reflect how often *we* have offended God, without conſidering that *he* remembers it; it is enough to affect us with remorſe and ſhame. There is no part of a man's conduct that more ſurprizes him, when he comes to reflexion, than that he did not conſider in his heart, that the Lord remembered his wickedneſs, although *he* did not. How could it be, might he ſay to himſelf, that I ſhould have ſinned in this particular, and in that, and yet not advert to the Lord's ſeeing it?—Not conſider, that he, whoſe eyes run to and fro through the earth, muſt behold an offender againſt his laws? How ſtrange is it that I ſhould be thus thoughtleſs, to wound my ſoul by frequent acts of ſin, to grow daily worſe, by daily going farther from God; that God, who is as able to puniſh, as he was able to create me. Surely I muſt be like the ungodly, deſcribed in the Pſalms. *The ungodly is ſo proud that he careth not for God: neither is God in all his thoughts. He hath ſaid in his heart, tuſh, God hath forgotten: he hideth away his face, and he will never ſee it.* Thus he might reaſon with himſelf, and reaſon truly. For ſuch as are thus careleſs are like the ungodly; nay, they are the ungodly themſelves, whom the ſpirit of wiſdom hath ſo juſtly deſcribed. They ſay, God hath forgotten—that is, doth not remem-

ber. But the ſame ſpirit contradicts theſe bold aſſertions—*Wherefore ſhould the wicked blaſpheme God: while he doth ſay in his heart, tuſh, thou God careſt not for it? Surely thou haſt ſeen it, for thou beholdeſt ungodlineſs and wrong.* We have no difficulty in believing this: for whatever the ungodly may ſay, it will be no hard matter for thoſe who fear God, to believe that he really does behold ungodlineſs and wrong. And, indeed, it is not improbable that many of the ungodly cannot help believing it themſelves; for though they may ſay, *God careth not for it*, yet it is much to be queſtioned, whether they really think ſo. It is true, they do not conſider in their hearts, that is, they have not a deep and ſettled conſideration, that God ſees them: yet if they would turn their thoughts inward and aſk the queſtion ſeriouſly, whether God ſees them or not? they would not ſo readily ſay, that he cared not. But it is through want of due thought upon the ſubject, that they do not conſider in their hearts, that the Lord remembers their wickedneſs—and therefore venture to ſay within themſelves, he doth not regard. It would ſeem as if it was done to put off ſome diſturbing thought juſt beginning to ariſe; and that it might not diſturb them, they baniſh it by a ſudden effort—ſaying, what ſignifies it to have any uneaſineſs about it? God careth not for theſe things.—There are ſome to be ſure who do not believe in God's all-ſeeing eye, and his univerſal preſence; but yet, I ſuppoſe, there are more who cannot help believing

it, when they take the time to conſider it; and yet, notwithſtanding, for want of attention, flatter themſelves with the hopes of his not beholding, or at leaſt, not remembering, to their utter confuſion, at a future day.

To ſuch, then, it may be uſeful to have a warning. It may do them good to be reminded of their inattention—to be brought to conſider that which they do not. And may we not ſuppoſe that the words of the text were written for this purpoſe. Why are the threatnings in ſcripture, but to alarm the minds of thoſe whoſe conduct expoſes them to thoſe evils which are threatened? Not only the danger of a ſinful courſe is mentioned, but the danger of being careleſs and off our guard is alſo mentioned; that we may avoid the temptation we are expoſed to from careleſſneſs. The benefit of watchfulneſs is deſcribed, that we may become watchful—The benefit of prayer is mentioned that we may pray—The help which the Lord is ready to afford is written, that we may apply for it--His mercy is ſpoken of in high terms, that we may not deſpair; and his judgments are recorded, that we may not preſume too much upon his goodneſs; but rather be driven from ſin to the arms of mercy. So the want of conſideration is written, that ſuch as need it, may be rouſed to conſider. Of this inconſiderateneſs there are many kinds. Men do not conſider enough that they are to die—they are not apt to conſider whether they are prepared to die—they

do not often conſider that they are really ſinners—they do not conſider that ſin muſt be puniſhed, either in themſelves, or in another for them—they do not often conſider whether their ſins have been ever pardoned; and ſo in many ways, men neglect a due conſideration. I appeal to you, my brethren, whether you do not ſuppoſe that among the many ſorts of inconſiderate people, there are ſome that conſider not that the Lord remembers their wickedneſs? If ſo, the words of the text were written for their benefit; that they may perhaps apply the doctrine to themſelves, and ſay it is too true: For when men are brought to ſee their error, it is a good beginning. And if a man hath often, or even ever ſaid to himſelf, "God hath forgotten my ſins, or hideth away his face and will never ſee them," and ſhould caſt his eyes upon this place of ſcripture, or hear it ſpoken of, where he diſcovers his thoughts are unveiled by the word of truth; and that he is juſt ſuch a man, as is there deſcribed, he may be ſtruck with a fear of that God, who, he was weak enough to ſuppoſe, had forgotten him. And then the caſe will be reverſed. He had ſaid that God had forgotten; but now he is afraid that God never will forget his ſins: He before ſaid, that the Lord had done what he now believes he never will do. This is a common caſe of the ungodly, when they firſt ſee their ſins in full view, they are ſo dreadful, ſo heinous, that they think God never will forgive them. If they are ſupported by a ſmall hope, it is but a

ſmall one; their general ſtate, being almoſt a deſpair of mercy.

This leads me to the *ſecond thing*, to wit, That there is another ſenſe in which the Lord remembers our ſins no more, and very different from that of which I have been diſcourſing. In this, an ungodly man ſays, God does not mind his ſins, and flatters himſelf, or rather tries to flatter himſelf, that his ſins will be forgotten though they have been never pardoned—that is, that God will paſs them by, though he has never repented, or ſued properly for a pardon. In the other ſenſe, God forgets or remembers our ſins no more, when after humiliation and amendment, he hath pardoned and blotted them out. Now for a man to be able to ſay this, That the Lord hath blotted out his ſins and will remember them no more, is as deſirable a ſtate, as the other before-mentioned is deplorable. That the Lord does pardon true penitents, is a comfortable truth, and one of the great points of the goſpel. When remiſſion of ſins, as well as repentance, was ordered, by Chriſt, to be preached, how do ſome doubt whether it is to be had in this world? The apoſtles ſpeak of it as a thing actually done, and not as a matter only to be expected in the next life. St. John ſays, *I write unto you, little children, becauſe your ſins are forgiven you, for his name's ſake, or through his name.* And does he not ſay, *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.* St. James—*That the prayer of*

faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up, and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him. And St. Peter—*That all the prophets give witneſs to Chriſt*, that the believers in him *receive remiſſion of ſins through his name?* And we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that this remiſſion is to be had *only* hereafter, when we compare the expreſſions together, and conſider alſo the teſtimony of experience about it. If our Lord had power on earth to forgive ſins, and did actually do ſo, why ſhould we doubt either his power or willingneſs to do it now?

The apoſtle to the Hebrews mentions it as a part of the new covenant, in his quotation from the prophet Jeremiah.—*This is the covenant that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael after thoſe days, ſaith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they ſhall be to me a people; and they ſhall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, ſaying, know the Lord: for all ſhall know me, from the leaſt to the greateſt: for I will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſs, and their ſins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* So that remiſſion of ſins is part of the new covenant; and we may look for its accompliſhment in performing the conditions of it, by confeſſion, prayer, humiliation, and amendment.

Thus, then, to have the Lord forget our ſins is very deſirable, and quite different from ſuppoſing

he does not notice them. And remiſſion of ſins is preached that men may arrive to this ſtate, by firſt having a hope of pardon, and then by actually obtaining it. I do not mean that the ungodly, living in ſin, are firſt driven from it by the hope of pardon: No; they are driven from ſin by the fear of judgment. The hope of pardon, however ſmall, at firſt, keeps them from deſpair; ſo that whilſt the fear of judgment humbles them, they are gradually led on by hope, to the throne of mercy. And this remiſſion of ſins is preached that ſinners, in their deepeſt diſtreſs from the fear of wrath, may yet have ſome hope left; that they may not caſt off all thoughts of ſalvation; and alſo that the proſpect of reconciliation may be ſtill plainer, as they return towards God.

And now ſhall we reflect a moment on the difference between theſe two extremes—that of not conſidering that the Lord remembers our wickedneſs, and will call us to an account for it—and that of conſidering that he hath done away our ſins, and will remember them no more? The former ſort are apt to dread the day of reckoning, and the latter to hope for it—I ſay, are apt to do ſo; becauſe neither of them always do it. The ungodly are apt to dread that day, though they do not always fear it: for they try to put it by, and that is the reaſon of their ſaying, God doth not regard. However, they are apt to fear, and it is this aptitude to fear that makes them try to ſhift it off, in the beſt manner they are able. They endeavor to

leſſen their ſins in their own eyes, inſtead of confeſſing them. If their ſins are too great for them to get eaſe in this manner, they try ſome other, either to diſbelieve, (for men may help forward their unbelief as well as their belief) or reſolve to repent hereafter, or elſe to ſay the Lord careth not for it, not conſidering in their hearts that he does remember. The text mentions, conſidering in the heart, and not without reaſon. For ſuch people have thoughts about theſe things, but they are but ſlight—they drive them off to prevent their impreſſion; and that is the cauſe why they conſider it not in their hearts.

On the other hand, the godly have a diſpoſition or aptitude to hope for the ſame day, though they do not always or conſtantly wiſh for it. They hope for it, not as a day of puniſhment, but as a day of happineſs—they hope for it, becauſe they conſider their ſins as done away and forgotten, and look for that glory from the Lord, which is reſerved for them that hope in his holy name. They truſt in the Lord for ſalvation, and according to his word, hope for it, as he hath promiſed. The ſtronger their hope, the more they try to pleaſe him, becauſe their love is ſo much the greater; and the more they try to pleaſe him, the ſtronger will their hope be.

And now I ſhall conclude, by obſerving to you, how proper it would be for every one, here preſent, to aſk his own heart, whether he is one, that is apt

to ſhift off the evil day or not? Whether he ever aims to get peace by ſuppoſing that God doth not remember his wickedneſs: or, whether he in any other manner endeavors after a falſe peace; juſt a preſent lull to the riſings of a troubled mind? If there are any ſuch here, then take this ſermon as a warning, perhaps from the Lord, to awaken you to better thoughts; to a deeper conſideration that you muſt one day give an account of your conduct, and that to the Judge of all men—to the great Judge of the whole earth, who knoweth the ſecrets of your hearts, as well as the words of your mouth. There is not a word in your tongue, but he knoweth it altogether. If you have ſworn falſely, or ſworn vainly, he knoweth it. If you have ſlandered your neighbor, or harbored malice in your heart againſt him, he knoweth it. If you have defrauded or otherwiſe wronged your neighbor, either in his perſon, or eſtate, or good name, the Lord knoweth it as well as you; for he beholdeth ungodlineſs and wrong. And if he knoweth theſe things, and every other ſin, and you muſt be brought to judgment for them, or obtain a pardon; ſhould you not with all your might ſtrive to obtain this pardon? and ſhould you not ſtrive to obtain it now; or can you think it better to delay it till it is too late?

But if, upon examination, there be others here preſent, who do not ſee that they have been quite ſo inconſiderate, as to ſuppoſe they are hidden from the eyes of the Lord, or that he doth not mind

them; and yet can ſee that they have been too diſobedient to laws; and having ſinned againſt them, are guilty, and ſubject to puniſhment alſo, though not in the ſame degree as the more ungodly—then if there be ſuch here, you may need counſel too; and the counſel I give, is to confeſs your ſins alſo, one by one, and beg for mercy daily; and be watchful in future againſt them, and all other ſins whatever. Pray earneſtly, conſtantly, to him who is the only Saviour. It is, indeed, eaſy to adviſe men to confeſs their ſins; and it appears eaſy to follow ſuch advice. But experience is againſt it; for though it ſeems ſuch an eaſy matter, perhaps not one in twenty, when they return from church, will confeſs them, either in general or particular. Though we are told from the Bible, that if we will confeſs our ſins, we ſhall have forgiveneſs, yet one would think from the event, that it is almoſt as eaſy to perſuade a ſinner to leave his ſins, as to confeſs them by a particular confeſſion. And this is mentioned juſt to ſtir you up to confeſſion.

But there may be others alſo here, beſides the two ſorts above-mentioned, and they are the godly, who walk in all the commandments, with an earneſt deſire to be found diligent in the work of the Lord. Let me adviſe you to be watchful, and exceedingly careful of your behaviour; not with an eye of pleaſing men, but God, who trieth the hearts. This you will find neceſſary, to guard againſt the deſigns of the enemy, who may overcome ſuch as he finds off their guard. Confeſs *your*

sins too, knowing that you need mercy. And look to the Lord for help, knowing that you need help. Be humble in all your deportment, as followers of the Lamb of God. Put your trust in him, who is able to save. And may we all obtain the crown of glory, that fadeth not away. Now to God, &c.

SERMON XVIII.

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

BY

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PROV. XXIII. 17.

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

THERE is ſcarce any thing that has a more immediate influence upon our duty or our comfort, than the due government of the paſſions. When they are properly directed, they ſerve as powerful ſprings of right action; but unguided by reaſon, and revelation, they are the fruitful ſources of vice, guilt and ruin.

Hence the wiſe and virtuous, in all ages, have employed themſelves in forming rules for their regulation. But it has been found more eaſy to preſcribe, than to reduce theſe rules to practice.

Herein, then, the religion of Jeſus has the advantage over every other ſyſtem of morality, in that

it not only prescribes the most just and proper rules for this end; but provides the assistance that is requisite to enable us to comply with them.

This is the special business of the spirit of grace, in the œconomy of man's salvation; and directed and assisted by him, we are enabled to *be, and walk, in the fear of the Lord all the day long*, agreeably to the precept in our text.

To enable you to understand and improve this important precept, in a proper manner, I shall endeavor, by the aids of this spirit,

I. To shew you what it is to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

II. Enquire why we should study thus to be in the fear of the Lord.

I. I am briefly to shew you what it is to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Fear is a passion of the human mind, and stands opposed to hope. It is that passion, by which the author of nature guards us against danger; and in this view, when properly directed, is of singular use in the conduct of life. It always has for its object some evil, real or supposed; and, in the words of our text, with many other places in sacred scripture, its immediate object is *the evil and danger of sinning against God*; and *the just displeasure of God, in consequence of offending him*. To fear these, is to fear the Lord in the best sense of the

phraſe. This is the ſenſe in which the churches are ſaid, to *walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt.* And in the ſame ſenſe, *the fear of the Lord, is ſaid to be the beginning of wiſdom.*

But, to give you a fuller view of this grace, I beg your attention while I briefly obſerve;

1. That it implies a *humble reverence for God.*— A ſenſe of his being, perfections and character; *that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* That he is a God *of purer eyes than to behold evil.* There is no view of God that contributes more to form the human heart to a true fear of him, and a devout reverence for him, than a believing view of the holineſs of his nature. This is the caſe of the Angels themſelves, as we learn from Iſaiah vi. 1—3. *I ſaw alſo, the Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it ſtood the ſeraphims; each one had ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and ſaid, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*

There cannot be a more lively deſcription of reverence and godly fear, than that given us in the conduct of the ſeraphim, verſe 2. You will pleaſe to obſerve, each one of theſe adoring ſpirits had ſix wings. *With twain they covered their faces*— ſtruck with the majeſty of God, and unable to be-

hold his glory; *and with twain they covered their feet*—as unworthy to ſtand in his ſacred preſence, though immaculate, and the higheſt order of rational creatures known to us; *and with twain they did fly*—importing the alacrity, cheerfulneſs and expedition, with which they execute the divine commands. And the ſource of this reverence, humility and obedience, we have, verſe 3. It was the view they had of the holineſs of the divine nature. *For one cried unto another, and ſaid, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*

A like effect of the like view of this ſame attribute, we have in the conduct of the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders; of whom we read in the 4th chapter of the Revelation of St. John, from the 8th to the 11th verſe.—

A knowledge of the greatneſs and majeſty of God, has alſo no ſmall inſtrumentality in promoting this temper. This appears in the caſe of the prophet Jeremiah, x. 6, 7. *Foraſmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?* To the ſame purpoſe are the words of the Pſalmiſt; *For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praiſed; he is to be feared above all gods.*

He is alſo a God of ſtrict and invariable juſtice. A God *who will puniſh iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin; and who will by no means clear the guilty*, without an intereſt in the atonement of the Mediator.

If you add to all this, that Jehovah is an all-ſeeing and a heart-ſearching God, you will eaſily perceive, that this reverence, this godly fear juſtly becomes us. And few of the divine attributes have a more powerful influence on this temper, than his omniſcience, when properly underſtood and realized. That *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth—diſcerning the thoughts and intents of the heart; and, that there is not any creature that is not manifeſt in his ſight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* That no darkneſs can hide from him. That the ſhades of midnight, and the blaze of noon, are the ſame thing to him. A ſenſe of our being always under the immediate eye of this God, from whom nothing can be hid, naturally tends to beget and cheriſh this fear of the Lord in our hearts; to fill us with that reverence for his majeſty, that enters ſo deeply into the duty enjoined in our text. On the other hand—ignorance of God, and inattention to theſe perfections of his nature, eſpecially to his omniſcience and omnipreſence, are among the moſt fruitful ſources of that irreverence for him, which ſtands oppoſed to the grace I deſcribe. The language of the ſinner's heart and life is—*How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he ſeeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of Heaven.* He may not, indeed, venture to ſay it with his lips, but he daily ſaith by his practice, *the Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God*

of Jacob regard it. And, by the by, this irreverence for God, is the true ſource of that rude and unworthy practice of profane ſwearing. A practice that inſults all the laws of politeneſs, and renders the man unfit for genteel ſociety, while it violates the moſt ſacred obligations of piety and morality.

2. The fear of the Lord implies, *an habitual care leſt we offend him.* This is the genuine effect of that reverence for God, of which you have juſt heard. The more it prevails in the heart, the more will it govern and influence the life.—The true ſource of this care is, a ſincere love to God, and a deſire to pleaſe him. The man who does not love God, and deſire to pleaſe him, will not be careful, on juſt principles, to guard againſt giving him offence. Why does the dutiful child fear to offend a kind and tender parent? Is it not becauſe he loves him? Becauſe his honor lies near his heart? Thus in the caſe before us, the more we love God and his law, the more cautious and tender ſhall we be, leſt we ſin againſt him.—And this circumſpection ſerves, not only as a guard againſt the commiſſion of ſin; but it has a powerful influence alſo upon the performance of duty. It ſtimulates the man who fears the Lord, to a conſcientious and faithful diſcharge of the whole of his duty, to the utmoſt of his power. It guards him againſt omitting it in the ſeaſon thereof; and engages him to attend, not only to the matter, but to the manner of his performing it.

In a word, this habitual care, this circumſpection of conduct, that we do not omit our duty to God, our neighbor, or ourſelves; that we perform it in the proper time and manner; and that we do not knowingly and wilfully ſin againſt God, is literally to *be in the fear of the Lord all the day long*; and is one principal thing the Holy Spirit intends by the precept in our text.

3. This fear of the Lord has for its object, *the juſt diſpleaſure of God, as due to us for ſin.*

That we have ſinned againſt God, and hereby merited his higheſt diſpleaſure, are melancholy truths, that we do not, cannot admit of a doubt. And hence thoſe numerous evils that have ſo univerſally overſpread this world of ours; ſuch as ſickneſs and pain, war and famine, poverty, diſgrace, and death itſelf; and together with theſe, our being juſtly liable to be *puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* Moral and natural evil are inſeparably connected, and the latter never fails to follow the former, in a greater or leſs degree. And ſince we are ſinners, and conſcious to ourſelves that we are ſo, we juſtly fear the divine diſpleaſure due to us therefor. Thus the Pſalmiſt—*My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Not to fear the judgments of God in this ſituation, would be unpardonable ſtupidity, or a profane contempt of God. And this fear has its influence too on the purity of the life, as it tends to guard us againſt ſin, and is, therefore, one thing

implied in the text—*Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

But it is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh here, between that ſlaviſh fear of God's judgments, that deſtroys our peace of mind, and hereby incapacitates us for the duties and enjoyments of life; and that which only ſerves to guard us againſt ſin. The former is that of which we read, 1 John iv. 18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love caſteth out fear; becauſe fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* It is a ſlaviſh fear of God's wrath, a deſpairing horror of his judgments, of which the apoſtle there ſpeaks. This is that, which perſons under the power of a melancholy habit of body and mind, ſometimes have; and which alſo is the fear of thoſe who deſpair of the mercy of God in Chriſt. But this is not the fear which I at preſent deſcribe. It is only that fear of the divine diſpleaſure againſt ſin, that ſerves to awaken our attention to its evil nature, and, thereby, guard us againſt committing it.

Thus much for the nature of that fear of the Lord of which we here read.

It only remains under this head that we enquire, what it is to be in the fear of the Lord *all the day long.*

And this in general means, that we ſhould live under the habitual influence of this holy temper. That we ſhould carry it with us into all the duties of the religious and ſocial life, whether of a more

private or public nature; that we carry it with us into all the buſineſſes and amuſements of common life; into all companies and circumſtances. We are hereby taught that there is no ſituation, in which we can be; no employment in which we may be engaged, but what we ſhould conſtantly act under the influence of this fear of the Lord. It ſhould riſe with us in the morning, go forth with us, attend us through all the various ſcenes of the day, and lie down with us at night. And this ſhould be the caſe with us, through all the days and nights of our appointed time. Thus, *be thou in the fear of the Lord, all the day long;* the whole day of life; for the night of death will ſhortly come, and put a final period to it. This, is the ſenſe in which, *happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart ſhall fall into miſchief.*

This leads us to enquire—

II. Why ſhould we ſtudy to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long?

My buſineſs, under this head, is to mention ſome of the many reaſons, why we ſhould be particularly attentive to this duty. And let it ſuffice, briefly, to touch upon the four following at preſent.

1. *It is an excellent guard againſt the commiſſion of ſin;* that ſin which conſtitutes our depravity, and which is the fruitful ſource of all our miſery. This appears, at firſt ſight, from what has been ſaid of its nature. Can the man, knowingly and delibe-

rately, ſin againſt God, who has a ſuitable ſenſe of his being, his perfections, his character and his government upon his ſpirit? No, the very idea of his being under the immediate eye of that God, who ſerves as a ſolemn witneſs to all his tranſactions; a holy and a juſt God, to whom he muſt ſhortly give an account of all the deeds done in the body; would check his career and deter him from ſin. Think you, my brethren, that the debauchee who gives himſelf up to idleneſs and profane company; who waſtes whole days, and it may be nights, in the tavern, at the gaming table, or in places of a ſtill more infamous character, that he can have the fear of God before his eyes? Verily no. It is becauſe he is deſtitute of this principle, that the ſinner reſtrains prayer before God; that he dares to take his ſacred name, in a profane manner, in his unhallowed lips; that he dares to get drunk; commit uncleanneſs; lie; profane the ſabbath of the Lord; ſteal, or otherwiſe defraud his neighbor. The fear of the Lord would effectually engage him to forſake theſe and every other vicious courſe. It would ſtrip temptation of its charms, and diſarm it of its force.

Hence the fear of the Lord, and departing from evil, are uſed as phraſes of the ſame import. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* And we read, *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.* And, *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* This is the ſenſe in which *the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.*

It not only deters us from ſin, and guards us againſt it; but, as has been already ſuggeſted, it excites and ſtimulates us to ſtudy a thorough conformity in heart and life, to the approving will of God. Hence the apoſtle exhorts us to *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of the Lord.*

2. It *greatly aſſiſts us in the right performance of duty.* I mean here the duties we owe, more immediately, to the moſt high God. Theſe, my brethren, are numerous and important. They are ſecret, private and public. They are to be performed in the cloſet, the family and the ſanctuary; nor is it poſſible for us to be the true diſciples of Chriſt, without a conſcientious attendance upon them. And you will further pleaſe to obſerve, God juſtly requires they ſhould be performed in a humble and devout, a ſpiritual and ſincere manner. This our Lord teaches us with great care. *God is a ſpirit; and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* But to all this, the fear of the Lord, as already deſcribed, greatly contributes. For in proportion as this fear, or reverence towards God, prevails in us, will the heart be fixed upon him, the glorious object of our worſhip, in every duty. In proportion hereto, we ſhall be guarded againſt thoſe vain and wandering thoughts that eat out the very ſoul of our duties, and degrade them into empty formality. God requires with great ſolemnity, *my ſon, give me thine heart.* A precept that particularly

binds us in this caſe of duty; for our God looketh at the heart principally, in all our approaches to him; and, indeed, he has a ſpecial reſpect to it, in all our conduct.

Again. It greatly tends to invigorate the graces of the ſpirit in the ſoul, and to call them forth into lively exerciſe. The more this fear of God governs the man, the more active and vigorous will his graces be. For the ſame views of the perfections, character and Chriſt of God, that are the ſource of the one, will promote the other. Our time does not admit of ſhewing you, here, how this is to be effected. It muſt ſuffice, at preſent, to obſerve, that ſo it is; and you will eaſily perceive, how a ſpirit of devotion is hereby promoted. For the proper exerciſe of faith, hope, love to God, and delight in him in duty, is that in which this ſpirit conſiſts. But, the more this is in exerciſe, the more eaſy, delightful and ſpiritual will our duties be.

3. This fear of the Lord *excites us to the important duty of watchfulneſs, and greatly aſſiſts therein.* There is no duty of the Chriſtian life more frequently and ſtrongly enjoined in the ſacred oracles, than this. You hear our Lord ſay, Matt. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* And again—*And what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, watch.* To this purpoſe are the words of the apoſtle—*Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit you like men, be ſtrong.*—*Continue in prayer, and watch in the ſame with thankſgiving.* To

which accords his exhortation to Timothy—*But watch thou in all things.* And did our time admit of conſidering, here, the many ſnares to which God's own people are expoſed in this life; ſnares that ariſe from the temptations of ſatan, the allurements of the world, and the depraved tempers and paſſions of the human heart, you would eaſily perceive the utility, importance and neceſſity of this duty. There are none of all the duties of the Chriſtian life, that have a more immediate and powerful influence on the peace of our own minds, or our conformity to God. It muſt, therefore, be a ſingular favor to be properly excited to it, and aſſiſted in the exerciſe of it. But this is the office of that fear of the Lord, which our text enjoins, as appears from what has been ſaid of its nature. For the man, who fears the Lord in the manner explained, will not only watch againſt every kind of ſin, but alſo thoſe circumſtances of temptation that lead to it.

4. *God recommends this duty to our ſtudy and practice, by his divine authority.*—This he does by the high encomiums he beſtows upon it, and that with this expreſs view. It is *wiſdom*, it is *underſtanding*. Thus in Job—*Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil, is underſtanding.* And in Proverbs—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;* or, as the Hebrew word will well admit of being rendered, it is the *principal*, or *grand conſtituent part of true knowledge.* And again—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of*

wiſdom; and the knowledge of the holy, is underſtanding. The fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence; and his children ſhall have a place of refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the ſnares of death. Add to all this, the duty before us is matter of expreſs command, as in our text. *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

Need I ſay more to recommend it to your ſtudy and practice? Would you wiſh to enjoy the comforts that flow from the purity of heart, and innocence of manners, which it promotes?—Would you wiſh to live a life of holy and delightful intercourſe with Heaven, and be uſeful in your day and generation? Would you wiſh to grow daily into a greater meetneſs *for the inheritance of the ſaints in light?* In a word, would you wiſh to die in peace, and go to be ever with the Lord? *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.* And for this purpoſe I beſeech you,

1. Study to acquire more and more of the knowledge of God; the knowledge of his perfections, character and government; eſpecially as they are manifeſted in and through his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. What has been already ſaid ſhews the influence this knowledge has on this fear of the Lord. It is its true ſource. Thus it becomes *life eternal to know God, as the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom he hath ſent.*

2. Be much and frequent in meditating upon the divine perfections. Call up their various and

numerous diſplays to your daily recollection, and dwell in familiar contemplation upon them. Thus your ſouls will be aſſimilated to them; acquire correſpondent tempers and diſpoſitions; the tempers and diſpoſitions to which theſe diſplays of the attributes of God, are deſigned and calculated to form the human heart. This is one thing imported in having *our converſation in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And the ſo general neglect of this great duty of meditation, is one of the fruitful ſources of that little improvement in the divine life, of which ſo many of God's people daily and juſtly complain; why they live and act ſo much beneath the dignity of their character, as the diſciples of a holy Jeſus; and often act ſo unworthy the juſt expectations of both their God and the world reſpecting them.

3. Be much in the great duty of prayer; eſpecially be conſcientious in obſerving the returning ſeaſons thereof, private and ſocial—This has a natural tendency to impreſs our ſpirits with that reverence for the divine perfections and character, that enters ſo deeply into the duty before us. And not only ſo, but in this way we are to ſeek, and in this way we may hope to obtain thoſe influences of the ſpirit of grace, by which this fear of the Lord is moſt effectually maintained and promoted in the hearts and lives of men. My brethren, if you do not make conſcience of this duty, in your cloſets and families, ſuch of you as have families, you cannot live in the fear of the Lord. Therefore I

beſeech you, *continue in prayer, and watch in the ſame with thankſgiving.*

Laſtly, To the duty of prayer, add that of watchfulneſs. You have juſt heard the influence this duty has on our perſonal conformity to God; I need not repeat it. Watch, therefore, your own hearts; attend to what paſſes there.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the iſſues of life. Watch your lips, that you ſpeak not unadviſedly therewith; watch your lives, that you do not offend againſt God's pure and holy law; *watch thou in all things*, and thus *be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

May the Lord graciouſly enable each of us, thus to *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of the Lord*; through riches of free grace in Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

THE PLEASANTNESS OF TRUE RELIGION.

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MATT. xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

WHEN we view the state of religion in particular, and of mankind in general, few things will appear more important than to convince them, that the system of piety and virtue, to which they are called by the voice of inspiration and of reason, is at once full of the richest consolations, and adorns every station and condition of human life. Upon a careful investigation of its discriminating principles, and a critical examination of its native tendency, it will be clearly seen to be wisely calculated by its heavenly author, to make us act like rational beings, to open for us treasures of real happiness in the present, and to crown us with endless honors in the future world.

When cordially embraced, and its duties conſcientiouſly performed, then, and then only, notwithſtanding the corrupt opinions of falſe Philoſophy, do we begin to live to any good and noble purpoſes: and then only do we begin to be truly happy. For no pleaſures can equal, in refinement and ſublimity, thoſe of pure and undefiled religion.

No miſtake, conſequently, can be more groſs and hurtful, and few more common than to ſuppoſe, that in order to be Chriſtians indeed, we muſt reſign all the innocent enjoyments of life, and bid adieu to many of the bleſſings of ſociety, and practiſe upon a total ſequeſtration from the world. For certain it is, that glooms and ſuperſtition, ſadneſs and auſterities conſtitute no part of that religion, which our bleſſed Saviour came from Heaven to proclaim to periſhing mortals.

He particularly informs us, that his *yoke is eaſy and his burden light*. He had juſt before invited, in a moſt tender and condeſcending manner, all who ſaw their guilt, and felt their loſt, ſelf-ruined condition by nature, to repair to him for help and ſalvation. *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.* Ye ſhall be put in poſſeſſion of that peace and happineſs which the whole human race ſeek with inceſſant ardor, but which the great plurality ſeek too, in a wrong way, and, therefore, never find. To perſuade us to re-

pair to him, to embrace his offers, and follow his example, he uſes, as a moſt powerful argument, the eaſineſs and pleaſures of his religion—*For my yoke is eaſy and my burden light.*

What is propoſed in the ſubſequent diſcourſe, in dependance on divine aid, is to make it appear that the religion required of us is an eaſy and pleaſant religion, full of peace and happineſs.

That the religion of the goſpel is an eaſy pleaſant religion, full of peace, and moſt friendly to our intereſt, in a large view, is an important truth, worthy the attention of all of every ſtation and character, and may be illuſtrated and proved by a great number of arguments from reaſon and ſcripture.

In general, virtue has charms ſufficient to recommend it to the love and purſuit of all orders of men. Its beauties are ſuch as to have found advocates in every age; who have laviſhed upon it the pomp of deſcription, and ſpread around it the flowers of Rhetoric. Moſt certainly its excellencies are ſuch, as ought to call up the attention and attract the notice of the world:—Its effects in this life are peace, and its rewards in the next ſurpaſs all conception. There is a dignity and majeſty in it, which ought to create in the mind an awe, and command a reverential reſpect. A character formed upon the model of the goſpel is the moſt exalted any can wear, far more exalted than the higheſt worldly honors can give. If any thing can recom-

mend the chriſtian religion to the beſt and worthieſt of the human kind, it muſt be a conſideration of its internal excellence, and tendency to render all, who receive and practice it, both good and happy. What could have a more direct influence to make a thoughtleſs race conſider and attend to the Chriſtian religion, than to hear its author ſay—*My yoke is eaſy and my burden is light.*

I. In this metaphorical language, reference is undoubtedly had to the heavy burdens and hard yoke of Jewiſh rites and ceremonies. The Chriſtian religion in its doctrines, duties, and inſtitutions, is eaſy, therefore, compared with the diſpenſation under the law. *The law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* The covenant of the Jews bound them to many ſervile, expenſive and laborious offices. Their rites and ceremonies, their ſacrifices and ſtated journies to Jeruſalem, which their males were to perform three times in the year, were, for the moſt part, of this kind. And thoſe particular and poſitive laws, which related to their civil ſtate, and were interwoven with their religion, were grievous and encumbring. And, indeed, the whole frame of the Jewiſh ritual, was as the apoſtle calls it, *a yoke of bondage, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.* In the religion of the goſpel, all this load of ceremonies is no more. We have no ſuch yoke of bondage, no ſuch burden of rites laid upon our neck. We have no ſuch lengthy journies to go, in order to attend upon, and enjoy the ſolemnities of public

worſhip. We have no victims to bring to the altar; no beaſts are to bleed; no coſtly ſacrifices have we to offer; no laborious and fatiguing offices to perform. We are not to come before the Lord with burnt-offerings—with calves of a year old—with thouſands of rams, or rivers of oil—eaſily may we attend upon the ſervice of the ſanctuary; and, in every place where the people of God convene for his worſhip, from upright motives, they have grounds to hope for his favorable preſence, divine aſſiſtance and approbation. Two ritual inſtitutions only, baptiſm and the euchariſt, are enjoined in the goſpel, both of which, inſtead of having any thing in them dark and burdenſome, are ſo plain, ſpiritual and ſignificant, as to be very ſubſervient to the power of real religion, and purpoſes of fervent piety. How different the Chriſtian from the Jewiſh diſpenſation! The one is dark and enigmatical, and the other ſimple and plain. The one abounds with various rites, the nature and deſign of which are not always readily ſeen or inveſtigated; the other is all light and liberty. As the ſplendor of the meridian ſun exceeds the feeble and reflected light of the moon, ſo does the religion of the goſpel that of the law, the yoke of Chriſt that of Moſes. It is not only more plain in its principles, and ſpiritual in its duties, but more rational. The religion of nature hath received its laſt improvements, and moral obligations are carried to their utmoſt extent, under the goſpel diſpenſation. Whatever it bids us do, or

requires us not to do, is adapted to our reaſon and conſcience. / There is no need of a long train of reaſoning to convince us of the fitneſs, excellence, and tendency of the precepts of our Lord, or the importance of cordially obeying them: Mankind, at large, can immediately diſcern all this. Every ſinner, of courſe, who will not be reclaimed from his vices, and ſeek pardon through a Redeemer's atoning blood, is under a double condemnation, that of his own conſcience and of God's word; and every pious and upright Chriſtian, under all the wounds of adverſity, has theſe two ſources always open for his conſolation, the approbation of his conſcience, and the promiſed bleſſings of the goſpel; both of which he enjoys with a fuller ſatisfaction and to a greater extent, than they could ever be enjoyed under the myſtical and ceremonial diſpenſation of the Jews. That diſpenſation had no merit in it, but as typical: it was deſigned in its very frame and make, to be temporary, and for a ſmall part of the human race, and to prefigure and prepare the way for the goſpel. It was a ſhadow of good things to come. A new and living way is conſecrated for us.

What a beauty, fitneſs and order are there through the whole of the religion of Jeſus; through all its duties—its doctrines—its precepts—its inſtitutions—its joys, and its promiſes! What a reaſonableneſs and fitneſs in our duly attending its offers, and conforming our hearts and lives to its laws! How fit and ſuitable that we ſhould worſhip,

fear, love and obey HIM, who is the fountain of glory and goodneſs! How infinitely right that we ſhould receive, admire and truſt in the grace of a Mediator! How fit that we ſhould regard our fellow men with the ſincereſt benevolence; that our hearts ſhould be open to, and feel the principles of juſtice, compaſſion and charity; that our tranſgreſſions, in all their number and aggravations, ſhould be mourned over, with (tears, the flowing tears of) pious grief; and that all our evil courſes ſhould be (utterly) relinquiſhed! Theſe, it will be conceded, are ſome of the moſt neceſſary and eſſential duties of the goſpel; and the appeal concerning their reaſonableneſs, may be made to every candid mind. Is there not a moſt evident fitneſs in them? Do they not, at firſt view, recommend themſelves to our conſciences? Muſt it not be prejudice or unreaſonable oppoſition to the goſpel, that ſhall object againſt them? He who turns away from the religion of Chriſt, acts then moſt unreaſonably, and is guilty of the higheſt incongruity. Becauſe there is nothing which the Supreme Being requires of us, as duty, or to which the Saviour calls us, but, in its own nature, is fit and reaſonable.

II. Further, Chriſt's yoke may be conſidered as eaſy and his burden light, as the ſyſtem of piety and virtue, to which he invites mankind, is the moſt heavenly and ſpiritual.

If ever a gracious God ſhould vouchſafe to favor the world with a revelation of his will, it is na-

tural to ſuppoſe, it would inculcate what only is heavenly and divine in its tendency. And we muſt have the candor to acknowledge, that the ſupreme aim of Chriſtianity, is to make us, in all reſpects, ſuch as we ſhould be, pious and holy, benevolent and kind, juſt and ſincere. (It hath no other) deſign (but) to make us happy—(to wipe off the flowing tear from the wet cheek—to eaſe the anguiſhed heart—to pour the oil of conſolation into its wounds—to mitigate our woes—to remove our fears—to reconcile us to our fate)—to fit us for, and finally receive us to Heaven. The very nature of Chriſt's religion is to illuminate the darkened mind, purify the diſorded affections, raiſe us above a vain world, and to deſtroy our worſt enemy, our own ſinfulneſs. For he was revealed to deſtroy the works of the Devil, to ſubvert the empire of ſin and deluſion. Such a ſyſtem as that of the goſpel (muſt) recommend itſelf, by its own internal excellence; like the king's daughter, it is all glorious within, beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jeruſalem, fair as the moon, clear as the ſun. (Whoſe heart but muſt be charmed with its beauties and glories.) Its worſhip, for example, is ſublime, pure and heavenly: the heart is the altar, whence ſacrifices are ſtatedly to be offered to the divine Majeſty. The ſpirituality of goſpel worſhip is particularly foretold by our Lord, in his conference with the Samaritan woman. *But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and truth; for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to*

worſhip him. God is a ſpirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth. The holy prayers and pure oblations of the heart, in which the eſſence of goſpel worſhip doth conſiſt, were prefigured by the incenſe and unblemiſhed ſacrifices under the law.

III. The plainneſs of the moſt eſſential doctrines of Chriſt is juſtly to be conſidered, as a further evidence, that his *yoke is eaſy*. His religion is a plain, as well as reaſonable and heavenly religion. In order to be generally uſeful, it muſt be eaſy to be underſtood. The bulk of mankind have neither leiſure nor abilities to attend to a dark and abſtruſe ſyſtem of Theology. The goſpel is deſigned for the MANY, not for the learned FEW—for all orders of people; not for men of ſcience and ſpeculation only. And, though ſome points in it be allowed to be myſterious and hard to be comprehended, yet all the doctrines neceſſary to our ſalvation, are plain and level to the weakeſt capacities. An honeſt heart is the principal requiſite to a right underſtanding of the moſt neceſſary truths. He who ſincerely wiſhes to know and do his duty, is in no hazard of miſſing the way to eternal life, while he diligently conſults the ſacred pages, and to an upright enquiry after truth and duty, joins conſtant prayer. If *any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.—He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye, therefore, hear them not, becauſe ye are not of God.*— Who among us but knows the great out-lines of

duty? Even childen, that are well educated, know that they ought to love, fear, and pray to their father, who is in Heaven, to receive and acknowledge the Redeemer—to do good to others—and to rule their own evil paſſions. In ſhort, the practical part of religion is ſo plain, that none can miſtake it, but they who reſolve to pervert it. If we take into the account, the diſcoveries which Chriſt made concerning a future world, we ſhall be ſtill more convinced that his *yoke is eaſy*. He has opened to us the ruin of our nature by the apoſtacy—the method of our recovery—the way in which we are to be ſanctified and pardoned, viz. by the influences of his ſpirit, and atonement of his blood: He has brought life and immortality to light; the wiſeſt of the Pagan Philoſophers but faintly hoped and gueſſed after another ſtate of being, but to Chriſtians, their Lord has made the moſt particular diſcoveries of a future ſtate; given the moſt affecting deſcriptions of the happineſs of the righteous, and the miſeries of the wicked, after death. The rewards and puniſhments of the other world are exhibited to us, under the moſt ſtrong and lively images, and the way how to obtain the one, and avoid the other, pointed out to us, in the cleareſt manner. Let the candid and unbiaſſed mind, for a moment, impartially ſurvey the very genius and make of the religion of Jeſus. It is a moſt mild and humane, a moſt benevolent and gentle ſyſtem, free from fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition, unnatural rigors and uſeleſs ceremonies. *The wiſdom*

that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocriſy. It is the very genius of this divine Philoſophy, to diffuſe over the world tenderneſs and humility, love and peace, harmony and good order, to ſoften and humanize the ſoul, to create within us ſublime hopes, and to qualify us for perfect felicity. Every ſocial, every friendly, every noble ſentiment is encouraged, all ſourneſs, wrath, bitterneſs, evil-ſpeaking, and evil paſſions are abſolutely prohibited. There is no one law, there is no one precept, or one reſtriction, in the peaceful ſyſtem of the goſpel, but tends to univerſal goodneſs, the higheſt and beſt intereſt of ſociety. What is the ſpirit of Chriſt, but a ſpirit of meekneſs, of kindneſs, of candor, of ſympathy, of generoſity, benevolence and philanthropy? *Grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* All pride, vain-glory, cruelty, revenge, and evil paſſions are expelled from the human breaſt, ſo far as the goſpel takes place in it. A merciful and lenient, a forgiving and beneficent religion, is that which we are required to embrace. A benevolent and good, a gracious and forgiving God, would not impoſe upon men, any other than a religion of good-will, that ſhould raiſe in us the fineſt feelings, expand the mind with the brighteſt hopes, and render us in the end happy. Accordingly, there are in Chriſtianity, no unneceſſary auſterities or rigorous impoſitions, no cruel and bloody tenets, no harſh and ſevere commands. We are only required to be holy and hap-

py. God is not an auſtere maſter, as ſinners are apt to think him, neither is he pleaſed with melancholy glooms, or ſuperſtitious horrors. Every thing that can contribute to our real good, or is friendly to our beſt intereſt, or promotive of the dignity of man, is allowed us. Supremely happy himſelf, and in the full enjoyment of eternity, God only requires that we ſhould be, in our meaſure, like himſelf, holy and happy. And if we would comply with his offers of mercy and pardon, we ſhould have conſolations here neither few nor ſmall; and glory, honor and beatitude hereafter. What one doctrine of Chriſt is cruel and hard? What one duty, which he enjoins, ſevere and unfriendly to our beſt good? All he requires of us is perfectly fit and reaſonable; and all things conſidered, more than any thing elſe could be, for our happineſs. He is, therefore, a good maſter, his yoke is eaſy, his religion is made up of goodneſs and benevolence, and leads to joys inconceivable, and to rivers of immortal pleaſure. And did it take place perfectly in our hearts, and in the hearts of all men, we ſhould not need to depart from this world, for Heaven, we ſhould find it here. Indeed all the joys of the celeſtial paradiſe, are but the product of the religion of the divine Jeſus. This idea will not now be enlarged upon, for I ſhall ſoon have occaſion to reſume it.

IV. Thoſe conſolations which Chriſt hath provided for his followers, in their greateſt extremity, the hour of diſſolution, muſt not be paſſed over.

This is a very common argument, I am ſenſible, to prove *his yoke is eaſy and his burden light*, and it is likewiſe a very convincing one. Death is the ſcene in which we muſt all be actors, the great and honorable, as well as the low and unworthy. At that ſolemn and awful hour, (the comforts of the good man may overflow,) and he lift up his head with joy, becauſe his redemption draweth nigh. Nothing is more likely to impreſs the mind with a ſenſe of the worth and glory of religion, than looking forward to the moments of diſſolution; and ſeeing how the Chriſtian may bid adieu to terreſtrial things; his peace; his joy; his compoſure; or his triumph. At the awful ſolemnities of a dying hour, the review of a life devoted to the beſt of all Beings, will fill the ſoul with rational, calm, and ſatisfying delight. The things of another world appear more ſolid and real to a dying ſaint, as he draws near to them, and his faith begins to turn into viſion, and his hope into fruition. He now, at the point in which we view him, ſtands upon the confines of both worlds, in the poſſeſſion of reaſon, and diſcerns, with more clearneſs, the vanity and emptineſs of that from which he is going, and the ſubſtantial and durable happineſs of that into which he is juſt about to enter. So that when he walks through the ſhady valley of death he fears no evil; and his deſires are then moſt lively and vigorous, when he is ready to give up the ghoſt. The voice of nature, the voice of reaſon, and the voice of conſcience concur, in

ſaying to the righteous, *that it ſhall be well with him.* In his laſt moments, he reviews his paſt life with pleaſure, bids farewel to the world in peace, receives the awful ſummons with calmneſs, launches forth into a boundleſs eternity with triumphant hopes, looks upward to his God with delight, and forward to Heaven with rapture. And, when all is cloſed upon his view, and the curtains of death are drawn, he enters on a ſtate of perfect reſt.

V. It will only be ſubjoined, that Chriſt's *yoke is eaſy and his burden light*, as his religion will terminate in immortal honor. The conſequence of receiving and practiſing his religion, in another world, will be all the bliſs of Paradiſe, joys inconceivable, and raptures on earth unknown. On ſuch a ſubject, language loſes its energy. Pomp of words only debaſes it. I ſhall only aſk, will then the happineſs of Heaven be the reſult of piety and virtue here? Shall all the followers of the meek and lowly Jeſus, at laſt, ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when all ſhall come from the eaſt and weſt, from the north and ſouth, when all the good ſhall be received to glory, and the wicked burned with unquenchable fire? Will they be welcomed to thoſe realms of eternal day, where they ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars for ever and ever—Where all the ſoul ſhall feel, ſhall be perfect bliſs, and all it ſhall expreſs ſhall be perfect praiſe—where all tears ſhall be wiped away—where perfect love ſhall fill every heart—and exalt-

ed Hoſannas employ every tongue?—Will all this be our portion, if we take Chriſt's yoke upon us? Doth religion end ſo glorioufly? Certainly then it is our higheſt intereſt, it is happineſs itſelf. Well might our Lord ſay, *my yoke is eaſy—my burden light.*

A few paſſages of holy writ will now be added, to finiſh the argument. From one end of the ſacred volume to the other, the idea of the pleaſures of a virtuous temper and life is exhibited. The happineſs of religion is foretold by the Prophets, promiſed by Chriſt, and recorded by the Apoſtles. By the Prophets it is foretold with as much clearneſs, and in as ſtrong terms, as either the holineſs of Chriſtians, or the glory of their Redeemer.

Bleſſed is the people that know the joyful ſound; they ſhall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name ſhall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteouſneſs ſhall they be exalted: for thou art the glory of their ſtrength, and in thy favor ſhall their horn be exalted. For the Lord is our defence, and the holy one of Iſrael is our king.

In what ſtronger colors than theſe, could any perſon be repreſented, whoſe whole life was one continued ſcene of pleaſure?

Again, *O how great is thy goodneſs, O God, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee; which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee before the ſons of men. Thou ſhalt hide them in the ſecret of thy preſence from the pride of men, thou ſhall keep them ſecretly in a pavilion from the ſtrife of tongues. Light is ſown*

for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart. Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace; length of days is in her right hand, riches and honor in her left. Great peace have all they that keep thy holy law and nothing ſhall offend them. His commands are not grievous, and in keeping of them there is great reward. What a beautiful deſcription of the value and worth of religion, under the name of wiſdom, have we in the following paſſage! *But where ſhall wiſdom be found? and where is the place of underſtanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth ſaith it is not in me and the ſea ſaith it is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither ſhall ſilver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the ſapphire. The gold and the cryſtal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it ſhall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention ſhall be made of coral or of pearls: for the price of wiſdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia ſhall not equal it neither ſhall it be valued with pure gold.* What the Prophets foretold, with one voice, the Redeemer hath confirmed by his declarations and promiſes. *Bleſſed,* ſays he, *are the poor in ſpirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Bleſſed are the meek for they ſhall inherit the earth. Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted. Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled. Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy. Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God. And he ſaid unto them, verily I ſay unto you, there is no man*

that hath left houſe, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's ſake; who ſhall not receive manifold more in this preſent time, and in the world to come life eternal. And in the text, *my yoke is eaſy and my burden light.* If you call his religion a yoke, it is an eaſy one. If you call it a burden, it is a light one.

To prove that religion is the ſource of the moſt refined happineſs, many teſtimonies may be collected from the apoſtles. St. Luke, in the hiſtory of the acts of the apoſtles, once and again ſpeaks of joy in the Holy-Ghoſt; of the peace and pleaſing wonder of thoſe who embraced the goſpel.—Thus the gaoler, we are told, *rejoiced.* The ſame account we find of the Ethiopian eunuch. As ſoon as Philip preached Jeſus to him, he was baptiſed, and though his heaven-appointed guide was ſnatched from him, yet the doctrine taking place in his heart, he went on his way, it is not ſaid, reaſoning only, or deeply meditating, or the like, but *rejoicing.* Indeed we have reaſon to ſuppoſe that all, who heard the goſpel to purpoſe, heard it with the ſame ſentiments of joy. They behaved, at firſt, like perſons quite amazed and ſurprized with the grace of God. And where nothing of habit or improvement could have time as yet to manifeſt itſelf, they were raiſed by the pure joys of the goſpel, above this world, and were ready to undergo, for its defence, the greateſt of all ſufferings. We read alſo, of *rejoicing always, and of joy unſpeakable and full of glory.* St. Paul comparing the Chriſtian

life to the military, calls it *the good fight of faith.* It is, indeed, GOOD, will be found ſo at death, and in a future ſtate. So much evidence is there from reaſon and ſcripture, to prove that Chriſt's *yoke is eaſy and his burden light.* If we examine either the principles or the duties—the doctrines or the virtues—the hopes, or the inſtitutions of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find it to be full of happineſs. Did it reign in all hearts, there would be nothing to deſtroy in all God's holy mountain. Nations would beat their *ſwords into plough-ſhears, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks, and would learn war no more.* The world would be full of the glory of the Lord: earth a ſtate of peace, order and univerſal good. Such is the nature and tendency of the benevolence of the goſpel. O benevolence! thou brighteſt ray of the Creator's glory! thou heavenly principle! thou ſweet bond of union in all holy ſouls!—May our hearts feel thy divine power, thy ſweet conſolations!

What remains but to urge all that hear me, to embrace a religion ſo benevolent and mild, ſo glorious and full of ſacred pleaſures? You, in this, are only urged to what is your beſt good, and higheſt honor, to what is reaſonable and fit in itſelf. Religion, believe me, doth not conſiſt in wild impulſes upon the ſoul; not in dreams and viſions—not in cold and heartleſs obſervances—not in mere external conformity to the laws of God—not in rites and names—not in profeſſions and forms, but in righteouſneſs and truth—in meekneſs and good-

neſs—in charity and faith—in purity of heart and piety of life—in a holy principle of action and the pureſt moral virtue. Againſt a religion of this kind, who can object? Him, who would wiſh to baniſh ſuch a religion from the world, we are obliged to look upon as hoſtile to human happineſs, as a foe to the higheſt ornament and dignity of ſociety. By a melodious voice doth this religion call upon us all, to yield ourſelves up to its government and laws. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men. O ye ſimple underſtand wiſdom, and ye fools be ye of an underſtanding heart. Hear for I will ſpeak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips ſhall be right things.* Where the happineſs of people, their preſent peace and future felicity is concerned, warmth of addreſs is allowable, is neceſſary. I would aſk to be indulged in a ſhort exhortation to ſinners, to repair to the ſon of God, *whoſe yoke is eaſy and whoſe burden is light*, for help and hope. Be perſuaded, then, to embrace the offer of pardoning goodneſs—taſte that the Lord is gracious—give up all your objections againſt piety and virtue, and all your excuſes for continuing any longer in unbelief and impenitence. Let not the remembrance of your ſins prevent your, immediately, ſeeking for mercy. What! though your crimes be of the deepeſt dye and enormous magnitude: though innumerable as the ſand on the ſea ſhore, and aggravated by the moſt uncommon and horrid circumſtances, yet there is no room for deſpair—a fountain is opened for Judah and Jeruſalem to

waſh in, from ſin and uncleanneſs. Chriſt's blood cleanſeth from all ſin. He is a Redeemer moſt eminently fitted—a Saviour moſt perfectly qualified to ſave guilty man, the vileſt not excepted.

Behold him ſuffering—bleeding—expiring on the croſs. Pardon for loſt ſinners is written with pointed ſteel and ſtreaming blood on his pierced hands and feet. The double flood iſſuing from his wounded ſide more than ſeals the dear-bought bleſſing. The handwriting againſt us is nailed to his croſs, and blotted out with his precious blood. His open arms invite ſinners to accept of ſalvation; and incircled in them, they will find a ſafe and delightful retreat—a real and preſent happineſs. O ſinner! on the wings of pleaſing hope, fly thither. By all that is near—that is dear—that is ſacred to thee, fly from eternal death—lay hold on eternal life. *Take*, ſays Chriſt, *my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light.* Amen.

SERMON XX.

DEATH THE CHRISTIAN'S GAIN.

BY

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PHILIP. i. 21.

To die is gain.

IT is not a very uncommon thing for pious people, and especially pious ministers who are useful in the church, to be sometimes in such a situation, that, were it left to themselves, they would be much at a loss whether to choose life or death. This appears to have been the case with the apostle Paul, when he penned the words of the text. When he considered of what great importance his presence was to the church, he desired to continue in the body: On the other hand, when he looked forward and took a view of that glory and immortality to which he was fully persuaded death would open him a passage, he was seized with an ardent desire to depart, and to be with Christ. This conflict he

expreſſes in the 23d and 24th verſes. *For I am in a ſtrait betwixt two, having a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better; nevertheleſs to abide in the fleſh is more needful for you.* Under theſe impreſſions, he comforts himſelf with a full aſſurance that, whether he lived or died, Chriſt would be glorified in him. *Chriſt*, ſays he, in the cloſe of verſe 20th, *ſhall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death. For to me to live, is Chriſt, and to die is gain.* My motive to live, is the ſervice of Chriſt; he is the ſupreme end of my life; for his honor only, I deſire to live; and to die for him, I count my greateſt gain.

The ſingle point I have in view, in diſcourſing from theſe words, is, to ſhew in what reſpects death is gain to the true Chriſtian: And,

I. In the firſt place, death is gain to the Chriſtian, becauſe it delivers him from the remains of ſin.

It is not the deſign of God, that the Chriſtian ſhould be abſolutely perfect in the preſent life.—He hath reſerved this happineſs for the ſtate beyond the grave. The relics of a corrupt nature continue in the beſt of men, while they ſojourn here in this world. Scripture and experience both conſpire to evince the truth of this. *There is no man who liveth and ſinneth not. In many things we all offend. He, who ſaith he hath no ſin, is a liar.* That man muſt be blind indeed, a great ſtranger to his own heart, and to the purity, extent, and

ſpirituality of God's law, who thinks himſelf perfectly free from all ſin. Such perſons plainly diſcover that they are impoſed upon by the deceitfulneſs of their own hearts; and are ſo far from full perfection, that they have not reached even the loweſt degree of it. Every good man is actuated by two different and oppoſite principles; a principle of ſin, and a principle of grace. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh; and theſe two are contrary the one to the other.* And though the principle of holineſs predominates in every good man, he is, notwithſtanding, liable to fall into ſin, through the remains of the old man, which are never wholly eradicated in the preſent ſtate. Theſe two warring principles produce a continual conflict in the Chriſtian, which laſts during life. Hence the Chriſtian life is, in ſcripture, frequently compared to a fight, and a race; things which require the moſt ſtrenuous efforts. *I have fought the good fight*, ſaith the apoſtle Paul, *I have finiſhed my courſe, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life.* Now, there is nothing which gives the true Chriſtian ſuch real and deep concern, ſuch continual ſorrow, as the remains of ſin which dwell within him. There is nothing from which he ſo ardently, and uniformly deſires to be delivered. Theſe are the great burden and ſorrow of his life. How does it pierce a good man to the heart, when he reflects upon his folly and ingratitude, in provoking his heavenly father, in yielding to the temptations of ſatan,

wounding his own conſcience, and grieving the holy ſpirit! He deeply feels the obligations he is under to his Redeemer, and bitterly laments that he ſo often falls into ſin, and violates the moſt tender and endearing ties. Hear how paſſionately the apoſtle Paul cries out under the burden of in-dwelling ſin.—*O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death!* Death is, therefore, great gain to the Chriſtian, becauſe it delivers him from that burden, of which the apoſtle ſo eminent in holineſs, here complains.—After death the Chriſtian's conflict is at an end; all his dangers are over; all his toils paſt. He is then freed, fully and completely freed, from all the remains of ſin, which gave him ſo much pain and ſorrow while he continued in the body. All his luſts are ſubdued, all his enemies conquered. He has no longer any need to toil and labor, to run and fight. Satan can no longer tempt; the world can no longer allure, nor his unruly paſſions hurry him into ſin. His victory is deciſive, his triumph complete. That the Chriſtian will be made completely holy after death, is a plain doctrine of ſcripture. The apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of the ſaints in Heaven, calls them the *ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.* The word of God teaches us to believe, that the righteous after death will be completely happy. But this would be impoſſible, were they not delivered from all the remains of ſin. As it is natural for them, above all other things, to deſire ſuch deliverance, ſhould they not

obtain it, there would be a ſtrong deſire unſatisfied, which is inconſiſtent with perfect happineſs. Beſides, it is inconſiſtent with the perfections of God to admit creatures into Heaven who are polluted with ſin. *Nothing unclean can enter there.* It is plain, then, that the Chriſtian, at death, will be delivered from all the relics of ſin, which remain in him while he ſojourns here below. And, as theſe are the ſource of his greateſt trouble and uneaſineſs in the preſent life, and the principal burden of his ſoul, death muſt be to him unſpeakable gain.

II. Death is gain to the Chriſtian, becauſe it delivers him from all thoſe natural evils and calamities, which are the conſequence of ſin, in the preſent life.

That the righteous are not exempted from the common miſeries and calamities of human life, is too plain to need any proof. The righteous governor of the world, ſeems generally to diſtribute theſe with a promiſcuous hand. *All things come alike to all, and there is no knowing good or evil by any thing that is ſeen under the ſun.* In this world the righteous are blended with the wicked, and ſuffer with them. Indeed if we carefully attend to the ſcripture-hiſtory, and diligently obſerve the diſpenſations of providenee, we ſhall, perhaps, find ſufficient reaſon to conclude, that the greateſt portion of ſuffering is commonly thrown into the cup of the righteous. Be this as it may, certain it is, that the beſt men in the world are ſub-

ject to many evils, and often in such a situation, that they may truly say with the apostle—*If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Whilst Christians sojourn in this valley of tears, they are subject to many distressing and painful diseases. *Their bones are chastised with pain, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain. They are made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto them.*— Their strength and their beauty are consumed by sickness; and they are frequently brought to the gates of death. They suffer not only pain of body, but much trouble and anxiety of mind. Many are the losses and disappointments, many the afflictive and bereaving strokes to which they are liable: And they must be something more than human, and divested of the common feelings of men, not to suffer under them. They suffer in themselves, and they suffer in others by sympathy. As they have, generally, tender and compassionate hearts, they cannot but be greatly affected with the miseries and distresses of their fellow-men. The husband suffers in the wife, and the wife in the husband; the parent in the child, and the child in the parent; friend suffers in friend, and one relation in another. Add to all these evils, the grief and sorrow which arise from seeing and hearing the abominable deeds and filthy conversation of the wicked. The apostle Peter tells us, that righteous Lot vexed his soul from day to day, with the unlawful deeds and filthy conversation of the

wicked in Sodom. It cannot but give a good man great concern to ſee vice abounding, iniquity prevailing, impiety triumphing, and like a mighty torrent, ready to bear down all before them. The honor of the Redeemer is dear to every Chriſtian; his kingdom and intereſt in the world, lie near his heart; he loves the ſouls of his fellow-immortals, and wiſhes to promote their eternal ſalvation. This being the temper of every true Chriſtian, it muſt affect him deeply, and fill him with unſpeakable ſorrow, to ſee God provoked, his holy name blaſphemed, the Redeemer diſhonored, his grace deſpiſed, his mercy abuſed, and all religion turned into contempt and ridicule. For theſe things his tears flow, and his *ſoul weeps in ſecret places.* He ſees thouſands of precious, immortal ſouls, running on in the broad way which leads unerring to the abodes of death. He is fully ſenſible of their danger, and foreſees the miſery which awaits them, if they perſiſt in their impiety and rebellion. This excites the moſt painful ſenſations, and fills him with the deepeſt regret.

But why ſhould I attempt a catalogue of the various evils and calamities, to which the Chriſtian is ſubject, in the preſent life? They are innumerable, and many of them terrible beyond all deſcription. From all theſe, death will deliver him; and therefore to die, muſt be his gain. It puts a final period to all his afflictions and miſeries, to all his ſorrows and ſufferings. In thoſe bleſſed manſions

to which he ſhall be admitted after death, there will be nothing to give him any trouble or uneaſineſs, nothing to diſturb his peace, or break his eternal repoſe. There he ſhall reſt from his labors, and be freed from all diſtreſs and tribulation. In that bleſſed ſtate, he ſhall no longer be ſubject to pain, ſickneſs or diſeaſe: for there, *the inhabitant ſhall not ſay, I am ſick; and the people ſhall be forgiven their iniquity.* The bodies of the righteous ſhall, at their reſurrection, be purged from all the ſeeds of diſeaſe and diſſolution, and made ſpiritual, incorruptible, and immortal. *This corruptible ſhall put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall put on immortality, and death ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory.* Theſe vile bodies will then be glorious bodies, and flouriſh in eternal health, immortal vigor, and undecaying beauty. Death makes a complete ſeparation between the righteous and the wicked. *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling.* They ceaſe to perſecute and oppreſs the righteous, to vex and grieve them by their profane converſation and impious deeds. In a word, the Chriſtian, by death, is perfectly freed from all thoſe evils and calamities which were introduced into the world by ſin, and, therefore, to him it muſt be immenſe gain. O what a happy exchange does the poor, afflicted, perſecuted Chriſtian make, when releaſed from his houſe of clay! from ſickneſs to health, from pain to pleaſure, from trouble to reſt, from war to peace, from grief and ſorrow to endleſs joy and ineffable delight! from bondage to freedom, from an earth-

ly cottage to a heavenly palace, from a howling wilderneſs to a blooming paradiſe, from a priſon to a kingdom, from a croſs to a crown! Welcome, thrice welcome death, the end of ſorrows, and the beginning of joys!

III. Death introduces the Chriſtian into a much more noble, excellent and happy ſociety, than he can poſſibly enjoy here in this world; and on this account, is to him unſpeakable gain.

After death, the Chriſtian ſhall dwell with God and Chriſt, and be the companion of Angels, and the *ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*. In the preſent life, the righteous are frequently obliged to aſſociate with the wicked, and their company and converſation cannot but be diſagreeable to them. They can have no true pleaſure or ſatisfaction in the ſociety of looſe, profane, and irreligious men. But it is their duty, and their neceſſary buſineſs ſometimes requires them, to mingle in the aſſembles of the wicked. This cannot be avoided while they are connected with them in a ſtate of civil ſociety. And though they always prefer the ſociety of ſober and godly men, *the excellent ones of the earth in whom is all their delight;* yet even among theſe, they often find ſuch a mixture of ſin or infirmity, of paſſion or prejudice, as renders their converſation not only imperfect, but ſometimes very diſagreeable. It is as true as it is lamentable, that even good men, in this world, do not always live in that peace and harmony which religion requires,

and which is neceſſary to their own comfort and happineſs. How indeed can it be otherwiſe in this ſtate of imperfection, ignorance and error? In ſuch a ſtate, men will always be liable to differ in their ſentiments. This ſeldom fails to produce oppoſition and contradiction, which naturally tend to inflame the paſſions and excite animoſities among weak, imperfect and ſinful men. The Apoſtles Paul and Peter were both excellent and holy men, yet we find they did not always agree; and the contention was once ſo ſharp between Paul and Barnabas, that they parted not on very friendly terms. And this is too often the caſe with great and good men; and greatly diminiſhes the happineſs which they might otherwiſe enjoy from the company and converſation of each other in this world. But death will put an end to all thoſe things which deprive us of that full ſatisfaction and inexpreſſible delight, which ſociety is capable of affording to ſuch creatures as we are. After death, the righteous ſhall be for ever ſeparated from the wicked, and no longer obliged to aſſociate with them; conſequently, they ſhall be completely delivered from all that grief and vexation of ſpirit, of which their wickedneſs was the occaſion. In the ſtate beyond the grave, Chriſtians ſhall be purged from all ſin and imperfection of every kind; and conſequently fitted both to receive and communicate the moſt ſublime and exquiſite ſocial pleaſures. Death will introduce them to the moſt intimate communion and *fellowſhip with the Father*,

and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt. In this world, their communion with God is imperfect and interrupted; but in the world of ſpirits, it will be perfect and uninterrupted. There they *will no longer ſee through a glaſs darkly, but face to face.* God will no more hide his face from them, and ſuffer them to walk in darkneſs: they ſhall for ever dwell in his preſence where *there is fulneſs of joy and pleaſures for ever more.* All thoſe dark clouds, which interrupted their view in the preſent imperfect ſtate, ſhall be diſſipated; and they ſhall behold the Deity in full unclouded ſplendor. There they ſhall converſe familiarly with the Father of Spirits, the fountain of life and light, the ſource of perfection and felicity. *In thy light ſhall we ſee light.* Their viſion is complete, their fruition full. There too they ſhall ſee, and for ever dwell with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whom having not ſeen they loved. They ſhall be admitted to the moſt intimate communion with him who died for them, and waſhed them in his own precious blood. They ſhall ſit down with him on the right hand of his Father, where he ſhines encircled with ineffable glory, for ever behold his mild majeſtic countenance, beaming with divine love and compaſſion, and drink in "beatitude paſt utterance," from his preſence. They ſhall ſee him as he is, be eternally tranſported with his love, and *changed into the ſame image from glory to glory.* Then will that prayer of our Saviour be anſwered: *Father I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me be where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

But further, The Chriſtian, after death, ſhall be admitted into the bleſſed ſociety of Angels. Thoſe glorious and happy ſpirits will be his companions. They will welcome him to the realms of light and glory; and without envy admit him to partake of their honors, and ſhare in their felicity. The righteous ſhall mingle with thoſe morning ſtars, ſhine with them, and with them ſhout aloud for joy. They ſhall hold high converſe with thoſe ſons of God; and with them contemplate the wonders of redeeming love. With them they ſhall rejoice, and with them adore.

The ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, will alſo be the companions of the Chriſtian in a future ſtate. When he dies, he ſhall be taken *to the general aſſembly of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in Heaven.* There, my brethren, if you *die the death of the righteous and your laſt end be like his,* you will not only ſee and converſe with all thoſe, who are now your companions in tribulation; but with all the good men, who have lived in the different ages of the world. There, in that happy country to which you will be tranſlated by death, you ſhall converſe with all the Patriarchs and holy men of old. There you ſhall be the companions of Iſaiah, Jeremiah, and all the holy Prophets, of whom this world was not worthy. There you ſhall ſee the harbinger of your Redeemer, who was a burning and a ſhining light in this world; but who glows with an intenſer flame, and ſhines with a brighter light in the world above. There you ſhall form

one ſociety with the twelve Apoſtles, who ſhine like the ſun in the kingdom of their Father. There you ſhall ſee Peter who denied his maſter, but afterwards ſuffered for him, raiſed from an ignominious croſs to a bright eternal crown. There you ſhall behold the beloved Diſciple feaſting his eyes with the viſion of his much loved and loving Lord. He burns with the ardor of a Seraph, and is ſwallowed up in the heavenly flame. There too, you ſhall ſee the apoſtle Paul, who of a perſecutor became a preacher, enjoying the full reward of all his labors and ſufferings, and confirming the truth of his aſſertion in the text—*To me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.* He *fought the good fight, he finiſhed his courſe*, and now a never-fading crown of glory flouriſhes upon his head. In thoſe bright regions, you ſhall ſee the glorious army of martyrs, who *were ſlain for the word of God and the teſtimony of Jeſus*, clothed in white robes, with crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands. *Theſe are they who came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* O my brethren, what unſpeakable happineſs muſt it be, to be admitted into ſuch a ſociety! What exquiſite happineſs do good and wiſe men enjoy, from the ſociety of each other, even here upon earth, when they are united in the bands of friendſhip, and have only an imperfect ſimilarity of tempers, diſpoſitions, and ſentiments! With what ardor do they embrace each other! How do their features lighten up, when

they meet, and their ſouls ſpring forward, as it were, to ſalute each other! What a feaſt of love and joy do their preſence and diſcourſes afford! How much happineſs do they give, how much receive! How do they entertain, how do they pleaſe and inſtruct each other! What ſweet counſel do they take together! Now, if the company and converſation of pious friends, upon earth, can afford ſo much delight and mutual ſatisfaction, how great beyond all expreſſion muſt be the felicity of the bleſſed company above! In that happy ſociety, an entire oneneſs of heart reigns. They are all united in the moſt perfect concord, the ſweeetſt love and harmony. Their ſentiments are all one, their affections one, their joys one. (There is a perfect ſimilarity of tempers, diſpoſitions and inclination.) That celeſtial flame, in which they all glow, melts and mixes their ſouls into an entire union. (Every one ſhares in the felicity, and adds to it. The happineſs of all is the happineſs of every one, and the happineſs of every one the happineſs of all.) This ſeems to be the import of our Saviour's prayer, *That they may be all one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.* It is ſaid of the primitive Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, that they were all of one heart and of one ſoul. But how much more cloſe and intimate is the union of the ſaints in the heavenly Jeruſalem, where every one loves another as himſelf! (Hiſtorians relate, that as Alexander entered the pavilion of the mother of Darius, with Hepheſ-

tion his friend and favorite, ſhe kneeled to the latter, as being the more majeſtic of the two; but being informed of her error, ſhe humbly aſked pardon. To whom Alexander replied, "You did not miſtake mother, for this too, is Alexander." This is but a faint image of that endearing friendſhip and tranſcendent love which reigns in the hearts of the bleſſed in Heaven. How raviſhing muſt be the converſation of ſuch friends! how ſweet their intercourſe! With what rapture do they pour out their hearts to each other, and converſe of the works and ways of God! With what delightful admiration do they recount the ineſtimable bleſſings they mutually enjoy! With what tranſport do they adore, with what extacy do they join, in celebrating the wonders of redeeming love! O happy company! O bleſſed ſociety! may the Chriſtian ſay, when ſhall I mingle in your aſſembly? When ſhall I be delivered from this priſon of clay, burn in your flames, and join in your ſongs?

If Socrates, a heathen, could comfort himſelf before his death, with the hope that he was going to converſe with Homer, Heſiod, and other heroes and ſages of antiquity; ſhould not the Chriſtian much more rejoice at the approach of death, which tranſlates him to the ſociety and converſation of the bleſſed in Heaven? What abundant conſolation ſhould it afford, that in the ſtate beyond the grave he will be *brought to an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly of the church of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in Heaven, and to God*

the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the mediator of the new covenant?

With ſuch bright and glorious proſpects before him, how can he not reckon death immenſe and unſpeakable gain? (And how truly may he adopt the language of the apoſtle in the text, *To me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain?*)

IV. The employments of the Chriſtian after death will be much more noble and excellent, than they are in the preſent life; and therefore, to die, is to him gain.

While the Chriſtian is in his ſtate of pilgrimage here upon earth, a great part of his time is commonly employed about things of a temporal nature. While he is in the body, it is his duty to provide for the body; and this engroſſes much of his time and thoughts. (This obliges him often to be engaged in matters which are very diſagreeable to him, though neceſſary in his preſent circumſtances.) Care and anxiety about the things of the preſent life, (too frequently break in upon him and) often diſturb his peace. Even the ſmall portion of his time which he devotes to the performance of religious duties, is but ſeldom ſpent in a manner entirely to his ſatisfaction. His beſt religious performances are very imperfect, and mingled with ſin. The world often intrudes; ſenſible objects preſs upon him, and draw off his mind from the work in which he is engaged. His heart often wanders, and his thoughts ſtart aſide from thoſe

important ſpiritual objects on which they ought to be fixed. He finds great reaſon to lament his coldneſs, deadneſs and formality in the worſhip of God. (It is but ſeldom he feels that flow of affection, that fire of love, that life, that vigor, in the ſervice of his God which he ſo earneſtly deſires. The praiſes of his redeemer often dwell upon his tongue, when he has no deep penetrating ſenſe of his love, and feels but little of the heavenly flame in his heart. And when he looks back and reflects upon the time ſpent in the worſhip of God, he finds many deficiencies, and ſees abundant cauſe of ſorrow and regret, of ſhame and confuſion of face.) But after death, it will not be ſo. The whole of his time will then be employed in the immediate worſhip and ſervice of God. This will be his ſole work; and it will be performed in ſuch a manner as to yield him the higheſt ſatisfaction, the moſt ſublime pleaſure. He ſhall no longer experience the leaſt ſin or imperfection in his duty. He ſhall be like a flame of fire, all activity, life and love, in the ſervice of God. There will then be nothing to call off his mind from the divine work in which he ſhall be employed.—No earthly thoughts—no worldly cares—(no carnal objects,) He will then have all thoſe diſpoſitions and affections in their higheſt perfection, which God requires, and which are neceſſary for performing his work in the moſt perfect and acceptable manner. In Heaven the ſaints ſuffer no interruption in their ſweet employment. *They ſtand before the throne of*

God, and worſhip him day and night in his temple. They ceaſe not day nor night, crying holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! The glorious perfections of God diſplayed in his works of nature and of grace, are the ſubject of their unceaſing contemplation, and moſt profound admiration. They continually celebrate, and continually adore the ſtupendous plan of redemption, where all the divine attributes ſo beautifully harmonize, and ſhine with ſuch unparalleled luſtre. The wonders of rich, free, and ſovereign grace in the ſalvation of ſinners, the immenſe, unfathomable love, of a bleeding, dying, Saviour, are their eternal theme. *The angels deſire to look into theſe things.—The rapt Seraph adores and burns;* and the glorious company of there deemed above, ſhall with rapture celebrate them through eternal ages. The entire union, and perfect concord of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits, in the work of praiſe, greatly enhance their pleaſure. Among the countleſs millions who compoſe this vaſt, this happy aſſembly, there is not one cold heart, one diſſenting voice, one diſcordant note.

"Ten thouſand thouſand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one."

The celeſtial flame of love, (like ethereal fire,) is communicated from heart to heart; the heavenly harmony catches from tongue to tongue; every heart joins with every tongue, and glory to God and the Lamb, is the united, repeated acclamation. Angelic harps and voices join the heaven-

ly concert, ſwell the bold and ſolemn note, and complete the full muſic of Heaven. Loud Hallelujahs crowd every ſong, and anthems of ceaſeleſs praiſe *to him who loved us and gave himſelf for us*, reſound through all the heavenly palaces.

O my hearers, could we only hear ſome faint touches of this celeſtial harmony, ſome imperfect echos of thoſe ſongs which ſaints and angels ſing, how would it inflame our deſires to join in that bleſſed work! *Bleſſed are they, O Lord, who dwell in thy houſe, they will be ſtill praiſing thee.* If ſuch are the employments of the Chriſtian after death, ſo noble, ſo excellent, ſurely death muſt be to him exceeding gain.

We ſhall now conclude with a few brief inferences from the ſubject.

1. From what hath been ſaid, we may ſee how little reaſon the ſincere Chriſtian has to be afraid of death. Death is indeed dreadful to the wicked. To them it is the king of terrors; it is the end of all their joys, and the beginning of ſorrows. No wonder then if they recoil, and horror and amazement ſeize upon them at the approach of the grim tyrant. But to the righteous, this king of terrors, is transformed into a meſſenger of peace. He comes as a kind angel to ſtrike off his fetters, unlock the doors of his priſon, and conduct him home to his father's houſe. The day of his death is the day of his deliverance; the day of his birth, into a glorious, an immortal and bleſſed life. It

is his great pay-day, his rich harveſt, when he reaps the fruit of all his labors, and is put into poſſeſſion of a crown which fadeth not away, a kingdom which ſhall never have an end. Why then O Chriſtians! ſhould you ſhrink back at the thoughts of death, which to you is ſuch unſpeakable gain? The ſtroke may be rough which daſhes into pieces your veſſels of clay; the valley may be dark and gloomy through which you muſt paſs; but it will ſoon open to you a bright and glorious proſpect, and uſher you into the regions of light, and life, and liberty. Why then ſhould we linger about theſe mortal ſhores, and dread to croſs the cold ſtream which ſeparates us from the promiſed land? We have had a view of the heavenly Canaan; the blooming proſpect lies before us; and ſhall we be backward to launch away and take poſſeſſion?

"Sweet fields beyond the ſwelling flood,
Stand dreſs'd in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan ſtood,
While Jordan roll'd between."

2. Let the Chriſtian learn patiently to ſubmit to the will of God, as to the time of his departure from the body.

There are Chriſtians who ſometimes appear impatient of life, and diſcover too much anxiety to leave this mortal ſtage. Tired of their confinement in a priſon of clay, ſinking under a load of years, and preſſed with various calamities, they long for deliverance. Having, as they apprehend,

ceaſed to be uſeful here, and pointing the eye of faith to that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which awaits them beyond the grave, they are ſolicitous to quit their preſent ſtation, to depart and be with Chriſt. But let all ſuch remember how much it is their duty to ſubmit to the divine diſpoſal, and with patience and entire reſignation, wait their appointed time. God's time is the moſt proper time. He has wiſe and gracious deſigns, in continuing his ſervants here in this valley of tears; though they may not be always able to comprehend them. The reward which he has promiſed is free and unmerited; and the time of conferring it ought to be wholly ſubmitted to himſelf. And remember for your conſolation, the period is not far diſtant which will crown all your wiſhes. The days of your tribulation will ſoon have an end; the conflict cannot laſt long. You will ſoon reſt from your labors, in the fair manſions on high, far above thoſe ſtorms which toſſed you here on the troubled ocean of life; where your ſun ſhall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw its light; and the days of your conflict and mourning ſhall for ever have an end.

3. Let us all endeavor ſo to live, that to die may be *our* gain. *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his*, is the language of all who believe in a future retribution. All wiſh to die comfortably. If then you would die the death of the righteous, you muſt live his life. There is nothing more abſurd, more repugnant to reaſon

and ſcripture, than for men to imagine, that they may live all their days under the power and dominion of ſin, ſerving divers luſts and paſſions; and at laſt receive the reward of the righteous. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right*, and diſcriminate between his friends and his enemies, between his loyal ſubjects and diſaffected rebels? Be not deceived, my beloved brethren; *God is not mocked; whatſoever a man ſoweth that ſhall he reap.* It is the unalterable decree of the great *eternal*; it is the voice of reaſon and revelation, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Let theſe words be deeply engraven on each of our hearts; and as we deſire to be happy hereafter, let us conſecrate ourſelves to the ſervice of God whilſt here. Chriſt came into the world not to ſave his people *in* their ſins; but to ſave them *from* their ſins. Let us then, *denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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